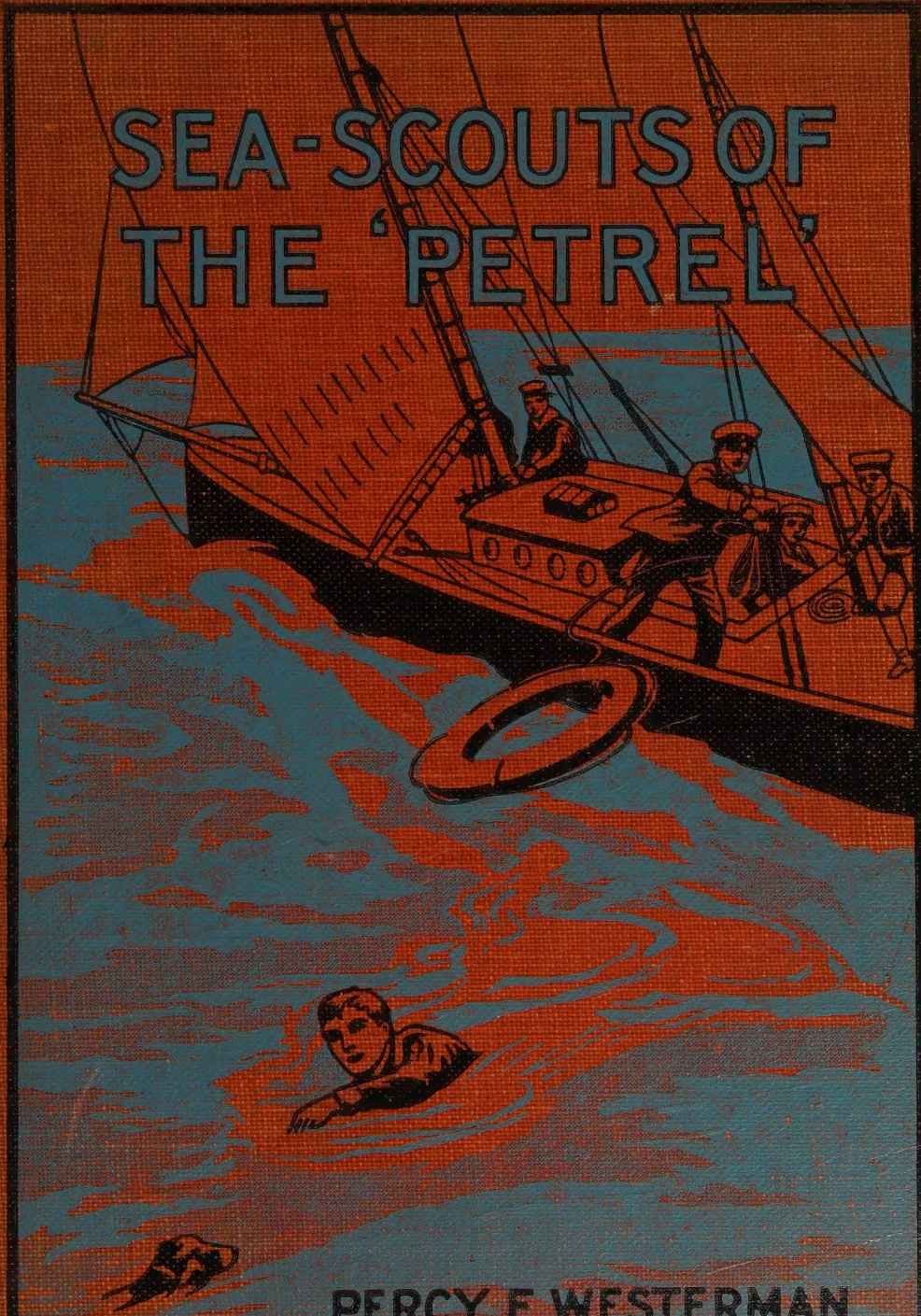
SEA-SCOUTS OF THE 'PETREL'



PERCY F. WESTERMAN

THE SEA SCOUTS OF THE "PETREL"

AT THE SAME TIME HE THREW A LIFE-BUOY WITH GREAT PRECISION.—*Page* 116

THE SEA SCOUTS OF THE "PETREL"

BY

PERCY F. WESTERMAN

AUTHOR OF
"THE SCOUTS OF SEAL ISLAND"
"SEA MONARCH" ETC.

WITH 8 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR
BY
ERNEST PRATER

A. & C. BLACK LTD.
4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
First published in 1914

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	DACRES' RESOLVE	1
II.	THE GIFT	8
III.	PREPARATION	13
IV.	A RACE AGAINST TIME	21
V.	HO! HO! FOR PLYMOUTH SOUND	29
VI.	THE CORNISH WELCOME	35
VII.	A CAPSIZE	40
VIII.	THE FIRST NIGHT ON THE "PETREL"	48
IX.	M'KANE'S TAN SAILS	54
X.	THE LIONS' BRIDGE	63
XI.	A LUCKY ACCIDENT	71
XII.	CINDERS	80
XIII.	HAMPSHIRE VERSUS CORNISH SEA SCOUTS	91
XIV.	SEA SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE	104
XV.	NOT WORTH A SILVER CROSS	113
XVI.	A NIGHT OF DISCOMFORT	122
XVII.	TRAPPED ON THE HULK	132
XVIII.	THE NEW RECRUIT	142
XIX.	ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER	152
XX.	THE MOTOR BOAT THAT DRAGGED	167
XXI.	THE BURGLAR	179
XXII.	"A SCOUT IS A FRIEND TO ANIMALS"	187

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	PENARTH'S SHOPPING EXPEDITION	195
XXIV.	A MISDIRECTED GIFT	205
XXV.	THE MAN ON THE MEWSTONE	211
XXVI.	ACROSS WEST BAY	218
XXVII.	THE DREADED RACE	224
XXVIII.	THE DERELICT STEAM-YACHT	231
XXIX.	THE BLAZING HEATH	239
XXX.	MEETING OLD FRIENDS	253
XXXI.	MISADVENTURES AT YARMOUTH	262
XXXII.	DISMASTED	272
XXXIII.	SAFE IN PORT	280

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR

	FACING PAGE
AT THE SAME TIME HE THREW A LIFE-BUOY WITH GREAT PRECISION	*Frontispiece*
"STAND BACK!" HE EXCLAIMED. "STAND BACK, I SAY"	4
OSBORNE CUT AT THE FISH'S NECK, AND MISSED	44
THE "SEALS" LOST NO TIME IN ARRIVING UPON THE SCENE	76
WITH LITTLE FUSS . . . THE TWO SEA-SICK BOYS WERE TRANSFERRED	160
THE PARTIALLY UNCOVERED ROOTS OF A TREE ENABLED HIM TO CLIMB UP THE BANK	198
THE FELLOW JUMPED INTO THE WATER, MAKING A TREMENDOUS SPLASH	216
AN INCONSIDERATE PORKER DASHED BETWEEN HIS LEGS	264

THE SEA SCOUTS OF THE "PETREL"

CHAPTER I

DACRES' RESOLVE

"WOULD you like me to mind your dinghy, sir?"

Stephen Dacres paused in the act of bending the painter to one of the piles of the toll-bridge and looked at the speaker. He saw standing by the water's edge a stocky lad of about fourteen years of age, dressed in a brown suit. His head was bare, revealing a closely cut crop of light brown hair, that if allowed to grow would develop into a mass of crisp curls. His feet were also bare, his trousers being turned up above his knees.

"What's your name, my lad?" asked Dacres abruptly, not out of curiosity but out of natural caution. Haslar Creek was not a place where a dinghy could be entrusted to a stranger, be he man or boy, without a few judicious questions.

"Tom Webb, sir," replied the youth promptly.

"Well, listen; I am going as far as Gosport railway station to meet a friend. I shall be gone about three quarters of an hour. If you give an eye to the dinghy until I return I'll give you a shilling."

Tom Webb drew himself up. A slight flush mounted his cheeks as he replied, "Thank you, sir, but I don't want money for looking after your dinghy. I'm a Scout —a Sea Scout."

"You are?" Dacres felt inwardly relieved. He had

hardly liked the idea of leaving a dinghy with two gun-metal rowlocks to the care of an irresponsible youth.

"Yes, sir," continued Tom. "I'm a Tenderfoot."

"You don't seem like it anyhow," retorted his questioner drily. "I shouldn't care to be running about on these stones with bare feet—but I suppose it's use. What are you doing here?"

"I'm waiting till the rest of the patrol turn up, sir. You see, we are repairing our boat. She's lying on the other side of the toll-bridge."

"You're not in uniform?"

Tenderfoot Webb smiled broadly.

"My Sea Scout uniform is hanging up to dry. I fell overboard this morning."

The youngster was too modest to explain the circumstances, how that he had jumped off the pontoon to save a little girl of three, who, selecting a dangerous playground, had rolled over the edge into the water.

"Would you like to see our boat?" he continued proudly. "She's a fine craft."

"I will, later on," replied Dacres, "when I return from the station."

With that he made his way up the steep shingly hard, gained the roadway and walked rapidly in the direction of Gosport.

As soon as Dacres was out of sight, the young boat-keeper began to clean up the dinghy left in his charge. In a very few minutes he had the bottom boards scrubbed, the tenacious mud removed from the blades of the oars, and as the tide was ebbing, he cast off the painter and coiled it up neatly in the bows.

While thus engaged the Tenderfoot heard the sound of boots crunching on the shingle. Looking up, he saw five young louts from one of the worst quarters of the neighbouring town. They all carried fishing-lines baited with small crabs, while one of their number was the

proud possessor of a fishing-rod made from a length of bamboo.

"Wot cheer, matey," exclaimed the tallest lad. "Put us over to t'other side, will yer?"

"Sorry I can't," replied the Tenderfoot. "You see it's not my dinghy."

"Well, wot odds? The bloke wot owns it ain't nowheres abart."

"That's all the more reason why I shouldn't. Look here, Jones, there's your father's boat up the hard, why don't you take her? You usually do."

The lout addressed as Jones stared at the speaker.

"'Oo are you?" he demanded. "'Ow d'ye know my name? wot bloomin' biz'ness is it o' yourn? 'Sides the boat is too bloomin' 'eavy."

"She won't be with six of us to haul her down," said the Tenderfoot, ignoring the questions put to him. "I'll give you a hand."

Hard work on a hot summer's afternoon was not at all to the gang's liking.

"Wot bloomin' kid is this?" asked Jones, turning to his companions.

"W'y, one of them Sea Scouts, I think," replied one.

A chorus of rude laughter greeted this announcement. One of the louts laid a muddy hand upon the dinghy's gunwale.

"Come on, mates, we'll borrer the boat."

"No, you don't," said Webb quietly. He was determined to prevent them from carrying out their purpose, although it was long odds.

"Come on, mates," exclaimed the youth, who had already advocated force. "'It 'im over the snout. Push 'im out of it."

It was now quite useless to expostulate. The louts advanced threateningly towards the young Sea Scout.

Agilely avoiding a blow from the pugnacious Jones, the Tenderfoot seized one of the oars.

"Stand back!" he exclaimed. "Stand back, I say. I don't want to hurt anybody, but——"

Like most bullies the aggressors were cowards. There was an ominous glint in the Tenderfoot's eye that made them give back.

Twenty yards off they stopped and opened a heavy fusillade of mud, small stones and dead crabs upon the dinghy and its guardian. Several of the missiles went wide, but many fell into the boat or struck the Tenderfoot with considerable force.

Brandishing the oar, Tom ran straight at his tormentors. They scattered right and left; those who escaped the Scout's attentions worked their way round and made a rush for the dinghy. The Tenderfoot was only just in time to beat off the attack in the rear. As it was, one of the louts had thrown a double handful of slimy mud into it.

The young ragamuffin had good cause to regret his action, for, regardless of the rough shingle that cut his bare feet, the Tenderfoot dropped the oar and rushed at him. Avoiding a vicious kick, he planted the astonished hobbledehoy a sharp blow on the point of the chin, sending him sprawling on the ground, where he lay, his head buried in his hands, yelling like a baby.

"Well done, my lad, well done!" exclaimed a voice.

The Tenderfoot looked up. Leaning over the brick parapet of the approach to the toll-bridge was Mr Dacres. He was not alone; by his side was a tall, fair-haired man with an amused expression on his face.

"I'm sorry about the dinghy, sir," exclaimed Tom.

"Nothing to be sorry for," was the unconcerned reply. "The way you went for that mob was simply splendid. I saw the whole business."

" STAND BACK ! " HE EXCLAIMED. " STAND BACK, I SAY ! "

The fellow who had been knocked down made no attempt to rise. He lay there blubbering loudly. The rest of the louts had decamped.

"Get up, you're not hurt," exclaimed Mr Dacres' companion.

"Don't hit me. I've had enough," whined the boy.

"I'm not going to," said Webb. "It's not cricket to hit a fellow when he's down. But you asked for it, you know."

With this assurance the discomfited youth picked himself up and slouched off, while Dacres and his companion made their way down to the dinghy, which the Scout was already wiping down for the second time.

"I returned earlier than I thought," remarked Dacres. "I met my friend on his way. He had come by an earlier train. Now let's see your Troop boat."

The Tenderfoot led the way under the bridge to a hard somewhat similar to that on which the dinghy had been left. Here, hauled up and lying on its bilge was a twenty-eight foot cutter that in its prime had belonged to a British battleship. It was newly painted, but the paint did not altogether conceal the defects: the result of hard usage at the hands of the naval men.

"Rather heavy to pull, eh?"

"She is somewhat, sir; but we get a lot out of her," replied the Tenderfoot enthusiastically. "We can sail her, too, only she makes a lot of leeway. But we are lucky. There are plenty of Sea Scouts with boats not half so decent as this, and lots without any at all."

"What is she up here for?" asked Dacres' companion, whom the former addressed as "Billy," but whose name was Cyprian Fane.

"To scrub her; and we are fitting a locker under the stern-sheets so that we can stow odd gear with safety."

"H'm, I heard Haslar Creek had a bad reputation,"

remarked Fane. "It may have now, for all I know. You'd better be careful, Dacres."

"One good thing, there are trustworthy Sea Scouts about," rejoined Dacres with an approving smile. "Well, good-bye for the present, Master Webb; we'll no doubt see something of you in the course of the next few days."

Stephen Dacres had just bought a large yacht lying in Haslar Creek, and had come down from Oxford to take possession of her. He was a man actuated by impulse. Often he would do a thing on the spur of the moment and feel sorry for it the next. Sometimes he had no such regrets. He was very wealthy, and although he spent money freely he took good care not to squander it.

He had invited his old college chum, Cyprian Fane, to come down and inspect the "Silver Spray"—the cutter which had taken his fancy—and Fane had accepted. The yacht was to be fitted out forthwith, and the two friends were to have a short cruise to Holland and back.

"Fine craft," declared Billy Fane when he had inspected Dacres' bargain. "Quite a ship. But, honestly, old man, I don't think I care for her so much as the 'Petrel.' What have you done with her—sold her?"

Dacres shook his head.

"No," he drawled. "She's lying at Falmouth. I haven't thought of getting rid of her just yet. Suppose I must, though. Can't have two yachts on my hands, but somehow or other I don't like the idea of a stranger owning her. She's all very well—I'm awfully fond of the old craft—but she's hardly large enough. When a fellow's getting on in years"—Dacres was barely thirty-five—"cooking and washing up on board doesn't appeal to him as it used. So that's why I bought the

'Silver Spray.' A couple of paid hands make all the difference."

"Yet it's a pity to let the 'Petrel' stand idle in a yacht-yard."

Dacres did not reply for a few moments. He stood with his hands thrust deeply into his trouser pockets.

Suddenly he gave a low whistle.

"I believe you're right, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "I have an idea. I have, really—a most brilliant idea. Billy, we'll look up that Troop of Sea Scouts, and if the rest of them are anything like that plucky little youngster—Tenderfoot, he called himself—hang it all! I'll make 'em a present of the old 'Petrel.' Come along, best foot forward. There's no time like the present."

CHAPTER II

THE GIFT

"THAT'S capital!" exclaimed Scoutmaster Leslie Carter. "A great improvement. Your idea of covering the floor of the locker with zinc is an excellent one, M'Kane, only remember you must not use copper nails. . . . Yes, Hornsby, that bearer is quite stout enough. Weight has to be taken into consideration, you know, and the boat is quite lumpy as it is."

The Seal Patrol of the 9th Gosport Troop of Sea Scouts had turned up in force that afternoon. There were Leader Jack Osborne; Second Harold Penarth; Dick Hornsby, Ernest Reid, First class Scouts; Athol M'Kane and Fred Summers, Second class Scouts; and, of course, Tenderfoot Tom Webb.

All hands were hard at work getting their boat—the "Porpoise"—ready for sea, and Scoutmaster Carter was here, there and everywhere, bestowing a few words of praise here, a little advice there, and frequently bearing a hand himself.

Leslie Carter was a tall, well-built fellow of twenty-five. His face, neck and arms as far as the elbows were tanned a deep red by reason of constant exposure to the sun and the salt spray. He was one of those men who, in a certain sense, never grow up. He was as high-spirited as any of his patrol. He revelled in their company, and the lads looked upon him as a comrade without taking undue advantage of the good fellowship which existed between Scoutmaster and Scout. Carter knew how to exercise his authority. He exacted obedience and commanded respect, yet with a tactfulness that disarmed

any suspicion of compulsion that might dwell in the minds of his young charges.

There were four patrols in the 9th Gosport Troop, comprising twenty-eight Scouts. Each Scout was more or less a "picked man." It was Mr Carter's idea that his Troop should attain a high standard of efficiency, and by purposely limiting the number of lads he was able to give greater supervision and also to impress upon recruits that it really was an honour and a difficult matter to become an efficient Sea Scout. There was no chance for a slacker amongst the aspirants for a place in the 9th Gosport Troop.

Presently the Scoutmaster's attention was attracted by the approach of two gentlemen in yachting uniform. It was rather unusual to see yachtsmen on that side of the toll-bridge; generally they landed on the hard where Tenderfoot Webb had encountered the roughs. But there was something about their appearance that gave Mr Carter the impression that they were in need of something.

"Good afternoon," he remarked affably. "Can we be of any assistance to you?"

"You are the Scoutmaster, I believe? My name is Dacres. I met one of your lads earlier this afternoon."

"Yes, I am the Scoutmaster: Carter my name. Webb told me you had a look at our boat."

"Didn't he say anything about my dinghy?"

The Scoutmaster shook his head.

"No; I hope he hasn't been getting into mischief. I'll call him."

"Don't," said Dacres hurriedly. "No, there was nothing wrong. The youngster's a brick. I say, Billy, you start the ball rolling. Blest if I know how to begin."

"It's your work," objected Fane. "Carry on, man."

The Scoutmaster was rather puzzled at his questioner's

obvious hesitation. Thinking, perhaps, that it was owing to the presence of the lads at work on the boat, he suggested that the conversation could be better carried on out of earshot of his youthful companions.

"Look here, Mr Carter," continued Dacres, beginning to recover his equanimity, "I've a proposal to make. Your Scouts haven't much of a craft."

"Between ourselves it isn't," said the Scoutmaster quietly. "She's old, heavy, and slow. Of course, it wouldn't do to tell my lads that. They derive a good deal of pleasure and healthy exercise out of it. After all, a boat is a boat, and we have a lot to be thankful for."

"Almost the words your Tenderfoot used," remarked Dacres. "Now this is my proposal: I've a ketch yacht called the 'Petrel.' She's eight tons and as sound as a bell, as stiff as a house and as able a craft as one could possibly imagine. How would she suit you?"

"I am afraid it is out of the question," objected Carter. "You see we could not possibly raise sufficient money to purchase anything of a craft of that size."

Dacres laughed good-humouredly, and brought his hand down upon the Scoutmaster's shoulder.

"It isn't a question of £. s. d.," he said. "I'm making you an offer—subject to conditions. I'll give you the yacht for the use of your Sea Scouts."

It was the Scoutmaster who looked astonished. He could hardly grasp the full significance of Dacres' words. Perhaps after all it was a practical joke. He had never before heard of people wandering about and giving away yachts far more cheerfully than some would hand a penny to a blind beggar.

"Say 'yes' and clinch the bargain, Mr Carter," interposed Fane. "It's perfectly genuine, I give you my word."

"But the conditions?" asked Mr Carter guardedly.

"Are not exacting," added Dacres. "Look here,

to show that I am in earnest: do you know Sunderland, the yacht-broker, of High Street?"

"I do."

"Good. So do I, having bought the 'Silver Spray' through him. Can you spare a quarter of an hour?"

"I can," replied the Scoutmaster. "I'll tell the lads, if you don't mind."

"By the by," remarked Dacres, as the three men walked towards the town, "I don't want any fuss made. Hate fuss like poison. Most particularly I don't want any mention of the matter made in the papers. Now, as to the conditions. The 'Petrel' must be well looked after and kept smart. I'll guarantee enough for upkeep, but your Scouts must find the labour."

"That ought not to be a difficult matter," observed Fane, "judging by the way those youngsters were at work on their boat."

"They really are very handy fellows," said Carter. "I can say it without exaggeration. But why are you making us such a handsome offer, might I ask?"

"Hardly know, 'pon my word, I don't," protested Dacres. "It was on the spur of the moment, I believe. To a certain extent you have to thank your Tenderfoot. He's a smart little chap, and I took quite a fancy to him. By the by, I forgot to mention it. The 'Petrel' is laid up at Falmouth: how do you propose to get her round?"

The Scoutmaster considered for a moment:

"We'll sail her round," he said. The difficulty of a voyage of a hundred and eighty odd miles was one that could be surmounted by a little patience, determination, and a certain amount of pluck.

"Good man!" exclaimed Dacres approvingly. "That's the very answer I expected. But here we are. I'll soon get Sunderland to fix things up."

The yacht-broker expressed no surprise when Dacres announced his intentions. He was fairly used to his wealthy client's little peculiarities.

"That will be all right, sir," he said. "If you will send me the yacht's papers I will see that the necessary Board of Trade formalities are complied with. Think yourself lucky, Mr Carter. The 'Petrel' is a gift well worth having. If you will call in next Friday I will have the document ready for you."

Outside the office, Dacres and his friend bade the Scoutmaster good day. They made their way to the hotel where they had taken up their quarters till the "Silver Spray" was ready for sea, while Carter, hardly able to credit his senses, hastened to convey the good news to the members of the Seal Patrol.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION

"LADS!" exclaimed Scoutmaster Carter. 'Knock off work for the present. Listen to what I have to say."

Tools were quickly laid aside, and the seven Sea Scouts of the Seal Patrol formed a semi-circle around their Scoutmaster, wondering what had occurred to occasion him to labour under such suppressed excitement.

"You noticed those two gentlemen who were speaking to me? Well, before I begin I must ask Tenderfoot Webb what he knows about them. Come along, Webb, out with it."

"I offered to mind their dinghy, sir; or rather the dinghy belonging to Mr Dacres. While he was away, some boys wanted me to row them across. Of course I said I couldn't. They then threw mud at the boat, so I beat them off. Mr Dacres and his friend saw me, and afterwards asked a lot of questions about the Troop. I showed them our boat."

"Now I will tell you what the result of your good turn is, Tom. Mr Dacres has given the Troop a real yacht—the 'Petrel.'"

A rousing cheer greeted the announcement.

"Where is she, sir?" asked half a dozen eager voices.

"At Falmouth. We have to sail her round. It's too early yet to discuss details, but I think we can manage it. It's three weeks to the end of the holidays. That will be ample time, even if we are delayed by bad weather. Next Friday the transaction will be completed, and on Monday, all being well we'll start for Falmouth. Now, I want every boy to bring me the

written consent of his parents, giving him permission to undertake the voyage. Mr Dacres has been very explicit. He does not wish us to run unnecessary risks; no night sailing unless absolutely unavoidable, and so on. So I think you will be able to inform your parents that, with due precautions, there will be no danger."

"And how about the 'Porpoise,' sir?" asked Leader Jack Osborne. "We won't want her now, and the 'Eels' and the 'Cormorants' already have boats."

"Well?"

"There are the Portchester Sea Scouts, sir. They have only a very small rowing-boat. Couldn't we give them the 'Porpoise'?"

"Thoughtful fellow, Osborne. Yes, I think we might do them a good turn. But we ought not to give them a boat in that condition, so set-to, lads, and make her ship-shape. There's not so very much time before Monday."

On the following Friday morning, Carter met Dacres at the yacht-broker's office.

"Here you are," exclaimed the latter, handing the Scoutmaster a batch of parchments and papers. "You are now the lawful owner of sixty-four sixty-fourths of the ketch 'Petrel': that's the phraseology of the Board of Trade, you know. I wish you good luck, Mr Carter, and a pleasant voyage.

"And there are a few more things I should like to mention," continued Dacres. "Hang it! It's no use half doing a thing. Here's twenty pounds towards the travelling expenses and other items that are bound to be incurred by the lads. I've written to Polgerrick telling him to get the yacht launched and have her gear put on board. Here is the inventory: I don't think you'll find a thing missing for Polgerrick is the essence of honesty. You'll have to take additional blankets,

I'm afraid. Goodness knows where you'll sleep the crowd."

"We'll manage that, I think," replied the Scoutmaster, after he had vainly attempted to express his thanks to the generous donor and had been abruptly silenced on that point. "The lads are used to roughing it, and after being accustomed to sleeping on the bottom-boards of an open boat they'll soon shake down."

"Let's hope they will," rejoined Dacres with a laugh. "I believe I used to rough it and I honestly think I enjoyed it. But there's yet another item. I should like each Scout to keep a log of the voyage."

"A capital idea," assented Mr Carter.

"And at the end of the trip," continued Dacres, "I would like to have an opportunity of examining them. I wrote to my father telling him that I had disposed of the 'Petrel.' The governor is a director of the 'Royal British and Pacific Steamship Company,' you know. Well, he wrote back saying that if the yacht was of practical use in turning out young seamen it was an excellent idea of mine. It's rarely the governor gives me credit for anything, so I feel flattered. He went on to say that there would be two vacancies for apprentices in the Company's fleet very shortly, and that he would offer them to the best Sea Scouts of the 'Petrel's' crew. I thought I would mention this so that you can see why I want logs to be kept."

"My lads have a lot to thank you for," said the Scoutmaster.

"Very little: the Company gains by it," protested Dacres. "It will be well, I think, not to tell the lads of this offer. It might create a false spirit of competition. Suggest to them that they should keep logs, and I will see to the rest."

"I quite agree with you."

"Very well, then; that's settled. I am leaving here

to-morrow on the 'Silver Spray.' I expect to be in Dutch waters for about three weeks. On my return I hope to see the 'Petrel' somewhere in the vicinity of Portsmouth Harbour."

Meanwhile the "Seals," under the direction of Leader Osborne, worked hard at getting the "Porpoise" ready for her new owners. The alterations had been properly carried out, and the boat painted inside and out with a finish that would bear criticism on the part of a painter and decorator.

On Saturday morning the boat was ready for launching. The Portchester Troop, who had joyfully accepted their brother Scouts' offer, were due a couple of hours before high-water to take their new treasure to her future moorings.

"Here they come!" announced Jack Osborne, as the eight members of the Portchester Troop swung blithely along the road, "fresh as paint" in spite of their eight-mile tramp. "Let's give them a good old cheer."

Lustily the "Seals" rent the air with a tremendous shout of welcome, while Mr Carter advanced to greet the assistant Scoutmaster of the visiting Troop.

The Portchester lads were quite as delighted with their gift as the "Seals" had been when they learnt of Mr Dacres' offer. To possess an ex-naval cutter had been their great ambition, but the attainment had hitherto seemed a great way off.

"She's nearly afloat," said Mr Carter to the assistant Scoutmaster. "If you'll order your lads to get on board and keep well aft we'll be able to shove her off."

Never was an order more promptly obeyed as the Portchester lads scrambled agilely over the bows of their new craft. With the united efforts of the "Seals" the "Porpoise" glided into deep water of Haslar Creek, and amid an exchange of stentorian cheers the cutter was rowed slowly against the incoming tide.

The "Seals" had done one very "good turn" that day.

"Now, lads," began the Scoutmaster briskly, "we are without a craft of any sort, although there's one waiting for us; so the sooner we get her the better. We've to be on board the steamer at Southampton by two o'clock on Monday afternoon. She will land us at Falmouth about five on Tuesday afternoon. The question is, how are we to get to Southampton—train it or tramp it?"

"Let's tramp it, sir," suggested M'Kane. "It's only about sixteen miles and we'll save the fares."

"Remember there's our gear," continued Mr Carter.

"I've thought of that, sir," continued the lad. "We have to take a blanket apiece and food for the journey. That won't weigh very much."

"What say the others?" asked the Scoutmaster.

"We don't mind the walk, sir," replied the lads in chorus.

Just then a tall, broad-shouldered, bearded man appeared in sight from under the toll-bridge and advanced straight towards the Scoutmaster.

"Good morning, Carter," he exclaimed affably. "I've been hunting you all over the place. Look here, I'm in a bit of a hole. My boy, Dick, has given me the sack. He's got a better job on board a racing cutter. I particularly want to get my yacht round to Southampton, so I thought you might be able to let one of your Scouts go with me."

"When are you sailing, Mr Banks?"

"On Monday."

"I daresay we can manage that for you," continued Mr Carter. "As a matter of fact I am taking the whole patrol to Southampton on that day. Penarth, our 'Second,' will, I feel sure, be only too pleased to give you a hand. He could join us there."

"What's that? All of you off to Southampton?"

asked the yachtsman. "What's up? Taking your cutter round?"

"No, we are tramping it."

"Gracious. What on earth for—exercise?"

"Hardly. We're going on to Falmouth by steamer."

"Then why walk? There's room for a dozen on my craft; you're welcome, if you wish."

"We must be there by two o'clock."

"Then we must take no chances. Suppose we say start at—let me see: high water at 2.15—yes, that will do, start at a quarter to four in the morning. We'll save our tide as far as Cowes and have it fair up Southampton Water. Do it on our heads, so to speak."

"Very well," assented Mr Carter. "We'll be on Gosport Hard at a quarter to four on Monday morning."

That evening the Scoutmaster spent at home poring over charts and tide-tables. He realised that the voyage of the "Petrel" was no light undertaking. He and his crew were new to the craft, his knowledge of the English Channel was limited, although he had several times journeyed by steamer between Southampton and Falmouth. The lives of several promising youngsters depended, to a certain extent, upon his skill and judgment. On the other hand, he could rely upon the courage and obedience of his patrol; ports of refuge, if necessary, were within generally convenient distances of each other; the yacht was known to be stiff and seaworthy; with a careful study of the barometer there need be little risk of being "caught out." The absolute necessity of having to be in a certain place by a certain time did not exist. This, he recognised, was an important consideration. With ordinary precautions the projected voyage ought to be safely accomplished.

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door and the announcement that Ernest Reid wished to speak to him for a few moments.

"All right—send him in," replied Mr Carter. He was used to calls during the evening from members of the Troop, when, from various reasons, he was unable to be present at the Sea Scouts' "Guardship," which in reality was a large room over a coal-store overlooking the harbour.

"Well, Reid?" asked the Scoutmaster, returning the lad's salute. "What's wrong now?" For the face of the young Sea Scout could not conceal traces of disappointment.

"My people won't let me go with the rest of the patrol, sir," was the reply. "I'm feeling awfully rotten about it."

"I'm sorry. What reason do they give?"

"They say it is too risky, knocking about at sea in a small yacht."

"Almost every pastime is risky, if it comes to that," remarked Mr Carter. "It is the knowledge that one has to combat and overcome risk that gives zest to life. It is very disappointing both to you and to me that you are not able to form one of the 'Petrel's' crew."

"But I meant to," exclaimed the youth impetuously.

"Directly against your parents' wishes?" asked the Scoutmaster quietly. "No, that won't do. I'll tell you what: I'll come round with you and see if we can persuade your people to alter their decision."

It was nearly two miles to the house where Reid lived, and completely off the tramway route. Scoutmaster and Scout walked quickly, Reid's hopes and fears struggling for the mastery at almost every step of the way.

But Mr Reid was obdurate. It was, he explained,

solely on account of his wife's disinclination to allow her son to undertake a comparatively long voyage in a sailing yacht. She would have had no hesitation in letting Ernest go for a trip on a crowded excursion steamer in a congested waterway, when in the case of a collision there was less than a quarter of an inch of iron plating to be holed to cause the boat to founder.

The Scoutmaster used all his powers of persuasion and argument, but to no purpose. Sea Scout Reid was literally "out of it."

Nevertheless he was a true Scout. He kept a tight lower lip, although his disappointment was keen.

"Never mind, sir," he said, as he shook hands with Mr Carter, "I'll be able to have many a jolly sail in the 'Petrel' when she comes home. I do hope you and the fellows will have a good time."

CHAPTER IV

A RACE AGAINST TIME

JUST before a quarter to four on Monday morning the six Sea Scouts of the Seal Patrol formed up on Gosport Hard. The sun had not yet risen, but the greyness of the morning betokened a fine day. What little wind there was came from the north-west, which meant that it was almost a dead beat to their destination.

"Any signs of Mr Banks?" asked Mr Carter, who, attired in a dark blue uniform and with an oilskin slung over his shoulder, and carrying a well-filled kit-bag, had just arrived at the rendezvous.

"No, sir," replied Leader Osborne. "There's his cutter lying just astern of the 'Arrogant.' His dinghy is made fast astern, so he must be on board."

"Yes, I believe he mentioned he was sleeping on the yacht. We'll wait a little longer; perhaps he has not finished breakfast."

Ten minutes passed. There were no signs of life on board the "Bullfinch"—for that was the name of Mr Banks' seventeen-ton cutter—except four or five seagulls perched sedately upon the sail-cover.

"I don't think there can be anyone on board, sir," remarked Hornsby. "Those birds would not be sitting there if there were."

"Webb, you run up to Mr Banks' house. You know where he lives? Good. Ask if he is in, or whether he is on board."

The Tenderfoot was off like a hare, his boots clattering up the pavement of the deserted High Street. Within a very few moments he was back again.

"I knocked and rang, sir," he explained. "I couldn't get any answer. I tried throwing small stones at the bedroom windows. A milkman who was passing told me he had orders to leave no milk till Thursday afternoon."

"That's pretty conclusive," declared Mr Carter emphatically. "I'll hail the yacht: perhaps he's forgotten the time."

Stepping down to the end of the pontoon the Scoutmaster gave a stentorian shout, "'Bullfinch' Ahoy!"

Up fluttered the seagulls, their meditations after breakfast being rudely disturbed. A sailor on the "Arrogant" made his way aft and looked in the direction of the hard as if expecting that some one wanted to be put off to the cruiser. The "Bullfinch" seemed quite deserted.

"Osborne!" called the Scoutmaster. "Signal to that bluejacket and ask him to hail the 'Bullfinch.' She's lying quite close to the 'Arrogant.'"

Standing well apart from his comrades the Leader sent the message. The seaman acknowledged it, but instead of doing as he was requested, doubled off for'ard.

"He's gone to report to the officer of the watch," said Mr Carter. "That will do the trick nicely."

Presently a dinghy manned by two bluejackets put off from the cruiser and headed straight for the yacht. Then up shot Banks' tousled head from the companion.

"He's only just woke up, by Jove," ejaculated Mr Carter.

Such indeed was the case, for having hastily scrambled into some nondescript clothing the owner of the "Bullfinch" jumped into his dinghy and rowed ashore.

"Awfully sorry," he exclaimed apologetically. "Overslept myself. Something wrong with my alarm clock.

Gracious me. It's a quarter to five. Get aboard as quickly as you can."

The dinghy, deeply laden, was paddled back to the yacht. The Sea Scouts transferred themselves and their belongings to the "Bullfinch" and stowed their kit-bags below.

"No time to be lost," continued Banks. "Cast off those tyers, then. That's good; I see you lads know your work."

The "Bullfinch" was under way in record time, for many hands make light work when the said hands know how to go about it properly, and with wind and tide she glided past Blockhouse Fort and was soon curtsying to the wavelets at Spithead.

"Clear course, now," remarked the skipper and owner of the "Bullfinch." "You take charge now, Carter. Keep her as close as you can without pinching her. We ought to fetch Cowes in half a dozen tacks. I'll get below and have some breakfast. You've had yours, I hope?"

"She sails much closer to the wind than our old 'Porpoise,' sir," observed Jack Osborne, who was critically watching the direction of the burgee.

"Yes, her keel makes all the difference," replied the Scoutmaster. "It gives a good grip on the water."

"I don't see why we are going to Cowes, sir," observed M'Kane. "Southampton is away to the north-west and we are going out of our way."

"We are doing it to work our tides," explained Mr Carter. "If we went direct we would have a foul tide for the greater part of the distance. Here, in the Solent, the tides are very complicated, and that is where local knowledge comes in."

"Shall we have complicated tides on our voyage from Falmouth?"

"No, in the open Channel we get six hours' fair tide

and six foul. Get the jib sheet in a bit harder, Hornsby. that's right. The wind is drawing ahead slightly. It will be all the better for us when we round the Brambles."

Seven o'clock found the "Bullfinch" in Cowes Roads with precious little wind and the tide on the point of changing.

"We'll never do it unless a breeze springs up," announced Mr Banks. "The sails are beginning to flap already."

"Six hours to do twelve miles!" exclaimed the Scoutmaster. "Surely?"

"I've known it to take more than that. You see if we don't fetch Southampton before first high water we'll drift backwards. It looks like a flat calm for the next few hours."

"We're drifting eastwards already, sir," said Penarth, who had been keeping two objects in line ashore.

"Then out sweeps," ordered the skipper decisively. "It's back-aching work, but it can't be helped."

Each of the two sweeps—twenty-foot oars—was manned by two Sea Scouts, the rest of the crew standing by ready to "give a spell." The stout ash blades bent under the strain as the heavy yacht gathered way, but still the progress was disappointingly slow. As the minutes went by the tide grew stronger, and in spite of taking the "Bullfinch" close in to the mud to escape the full force of the current, it became apparent that she was actually losing ground.

"We'll have to anchor," said Mr Banks, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "A breeze may spring up. If not, I'll put you ashore and you can catch the next steamer to Southampton. It goes just after twelve."

"And leave you in the lurch?" added Mr Carter. "No, we'll trust to luck and hope for a breeze."

For the next two hours the yacht lay at anchor,

rolling sluggishly in the "wash" of passing steamers, while her boom charged from side to side like a huge flail. Then just at ten o'clock the mirror-like surface of the water was ruffled by a dark line, coming off shore.

"Hurrah! a sou'westerly breeze," exclaimed the Scoutmaster.

"It is, by Jove," agreed Banks. "Man the winch there, you lads."

Up came the iron cable inch by inch, till it was straight up and down and as rigid as a steel bar. The Scouts tugged lustily at the winch-lever, but not another link could they get on board.

"Anchor's fouled something," announced the skipper disgustedly. "Our luck is out to-day."

"What's to be done, sir?" asked M'Kane.

Without replying, Banks ran for'ard and seized the boathook. The Scouts watched him eagerly, for instinctively they knew that they could "pick up a wrinkle."

After probing with the boathook the skipper announced that the anchor was foul of a mooring-chain. "And a precious heavy one," he added. "It's well clear of the bottom, fortunately."

Ordering the Scouts to clear away a coil of three-inch rope, Banks retreated to the cabin. Presently he reappeared clad in a bathing-dress.

"Now look here," he said, "I'm going overboard. Two of you stand by with that rope and pay it out as I go down. Don't let it go with a run or I may get foul of something."

Taking one end of the rope in his hand, Banks lowered himself into the sea. He did not dive, since the flow of the tide was too strong. Steadying himself by the cable he pulled himself under, Osborne and Penarth paying out the rope as he did so. In less than thirty seconds

he reappeared on the surface, still holding one end of the rope in his hand.

"Catch hold," he exclaimed breathlessly. "We'll soon be clear."

The bight of the rope was now under the heavy mooring chain. As soon as Banks regained the deck he made the lads heave away till the rope was as tight as it could possibly be.

"Now slack off our cable," he ordered.

As soon as this was done the whole strain of the yacht was taken up by the rope, and by dint of shaking the chain the anchor was disengaged from the mooring.

"That's better than losing an anchor and chain," commented Mr Banks. "Now, you lads, do you think you could get out of a similar difficulty?"

"I think so, sir," replied Osborne. "All you have to do now is to slip one end of the rope and allow it to run clear of the chain we fouled."

"Quite the ticket," exclaimed the skipper. "You've tumbled to it. Now, Carter, up helm a bit. There's a spanking breeze."

The wind held true till the "Bullfinch" was abreast of Calshot Castle. Then, with disconcerting suddenness, it dropped utterly.

"Out with the sweeps," again ordered Banks. "My word, it's nearly first high water. We'll never do it."

Although they had the tide with them, progress was slow, till even Mr Carter had to confess that the possibility of the yacht getting up Southampton Water before two o'clock was very remote.

"I'll tell you what," declared the owner. "I'll land the whole crowd of you in this creek—Ashlett Creek's its name. There's a path from there to Hythe—it's four miles following the shore the whole way. From Hythe there is a ferry to Southampton. Let me see, I've a time-table down below. Ah! here we are, there's a

boat at one-fifteen. You've just an hour and a half to do it, and it will take quite twenty minutes to get ashore."

"Get your kits together, lads," ordered the Scoutmaster. "A vote of thanks to Mr Banks for taking us so far on our journey."

Once more the yacht's anchor was dropped. Into the dinghy the Sea Scouts scrambled, Hornsby and M'Kane taking the oars.

It was a long row up the creek, although the old mill at its head seemed provokingly near; but the channel wound considerably, running between extensive mud-flats fringed with rice-grass. At length the dinghy ran alongside a small hard.

"Here you are, lads; good-bye and good luck," Mr Banks called out. "Don't wait, Carter, every moment is precious. I'll manage to get the 'Bullfinch' up single-handed."

The Scoutmaster glanced at his watch. It wanted a minute to a quarter past twelve—and four miles of uneven path to go.

"Shoulder your kit-bags, lads," he ordered. "Scouts' pace—forward."

It was a scorching hot day, and the absence of wind made the atmosphere oppressive. Here and there the trees that almost met the water's edge gave a little shelter. Yet not a murmur was heard. The lads, hampered by their belongings, kept steadily on, alternately walking and running. With set lips and with perspiration rolling down their faces, they pressed forward towards their goal—a long pier at the end of which a small paddle-steamer was waiting.

As the Sea Scouts gained the pier-gate the warning bell rang. Putting their remaining energies to the test, they literally raced down the long wooden structure.

"She's off, sir," exclaimed Osborne breathlessly.

"Carry my bag, some of you," said the Scoutmaster,

and taking to his heels he sprinted to the pier-head. He was only just in time. The gangway was hastily replaced, and the "Seals," well-nigh "baked," rushed on board.

"Where does the Falmouth boat start from?" asked Mr Carter of one of the crew of the ferry-boat.

"Close to where we land you, sir."

"Thank goodness," ejaculated the Scoutmaster.

"There she be, sir," continued the man, pointing to a fairly large black steamer with buff deckhouses and black funnel. "She's got steam up."

"She starts at two, I believe."

"Maybe; I've knowed 'er to start afore that," was the unconcerned reply.

By this time the Scouts had practically recovered from the effects of their exertions and were deeply interested in the shipping, for the paddle-steamer was passing quite close to the docks. There were vessels of all sizes, from the gigantic "Olympic" down to the fussy little motor-boats. There were ugly colliers, brigantines engaged in the timber trade, steam yachts, racing yachts and small sailing craft, to say nothing of numerous unwieldy lighters and hopper-barges: all combining to make one scene of commercial and mercantile activity.

Directly the ferry boat was made fast alongside the Town Quay steps and the gangway run out, the Sea Scouts hurried ashore.

Less than fifty yards off was the "Lady Edith," the steamer that was to take them to Falmouth.

"We've done it," exclaimed Mr Carter thankfully, but the next moment he gave vent to a hearty laugh, for chalked on a board at the head of the gangway was a notice: "S.S. 'Lady Edith': all passengers to be on board at 6 P.M."

CHAPTER V

HO! HO! FOR PLYMOUTH SOUND

"Of course, you know, sir," explained the steward, "that this is a mixed ship, and when you carry passengers and cargo you never know when you can get your cargo aboard. It isn't like a liner, but we must give a time, or else people would be turning up late."

With four hours to wait the Scoutmaster decided to take his patrol ashore, let them have a good tea and a look round the interesting old town of Southampton.

It was nearly half-past six before the "Lady Edith" really started, and as she drew clear of the quay the Scouts could see the "Bullfinch" snugly moored off the tail of The Gymp shoal. Mr Banks was on deck, semaphoring another farewell message to his former crew.

Two and a half hours later the Needles lighthouse was abeam and a course shaped towards the still invisible Portland Bill.

The Sea Scouts, tremendously excited, made no attempt to go below when darkness set in; for it was fascinating to stay on deck and watch the "coast-wise lights of Old England" slipping past on the starboard hand.

"It is practically impossible on this course to get out of sight of the Channel lights," remarked Mr Carter, "unless the weather is thick. Look astern. There's the Needles, and beyond that the very powerful electric lights of St Catherine's. That one on the starboard bow is Anvil Point, on the Dorset coast. When that is abeam we will be able to pick up the Shambles Light

vessel and Portland lights; and so on. No two lights are exactly alike, so that it is an easy matter, by referring to the pilot-book, to find out which one it is. In foggy weather they are all distinguishable by sound-signals, bells, explosive rockets or syrens, the latter giving different notes with various long and short blasts."

"Look, sir," exclaimed the Tenderfoot. "There are three vertical white lights and a red and green ahead."

"Quite right, Tom," said Mr Carter. "They denote that a vessel is towing another."

"But I thought, sir, that the tug only carried two white lights?"

"Three, when the length of the tow exceeds six hundred feet," corrected the Scoutmaster. "We may be able to find out what is being towed."

The distance combined with the darkness made it impossible to discover what it was, except by the aid of night-glasses, but as the tug passed abeam the Scouts could distinguish a long, low-lying mass over which the spray was flying in phosphorescent cascades.

"It's a battle-practice target, sir," said one of the crew, in answer to Mr Carter's inquiry. "It broke adrift in heavy weather off Portland last week and the tugs have been looking for it. Good job they've got her, says I, for that's a nasty thing to bump up against on a dark night."

Suddenly Osborne turned and ran along the deck. The "Lady Edith" was rolling in the long, heavy swell, and the Leader's quick eye had detected a dark object sliding over the deck. He was just in time to save a man from slipping under the lowermost stanchion rail into the sea.

"Bear a hand, Penarth; hold on to his legs," exclaimed Osborne, for the man was writhing violently and making a most horrible gurgling noise. "He's in a fit: it's apoplexy."

Other passengers who happened to be on deck came crowding round until the Scoutmaster requested them quietly but firmly to stand back. A cry was raised for a doctor, but there was none on board.

There was no need to give the Sea Scouts directions what to do. Osborne and Penarth turned the patient on his back while Webb placed a cushion under his head. Deftly the Leader and his Second loosened the clothing from the man's neck and chest, while M'Kane ran below to get ice from the steward.

Luckily ice was procurable, and the Scout returned with a full basin of it, while the steward, anxious to have a hand in the business, followed with a tumbler of brandy and water.

"That'll do the patient more harm than good," observed Mr Carter gently. "No stimulants under any circumstances when dealing with apoplectic cases. Where is this man's bunk?"

"Aft, sir, on the port side."

"Plenty of fresh air?"

"Yes, sir, we can keep the scuttle open."

"Very good; would you mind getting hot-water bottles ready for his feet. Keep the bottles well wrapped up in flannel."

The steward departed to carry out the instructions he had received.

"Now, lads," ordered the Scoutmaster, when the patient was able to be moved, "lift him on to this blanket. Three aside, raise the feet slightly when descending the companion ladder. Together—left."

And amid the admiring and in some cases envious looks of the passengers, the Sea Scouts lifted their heavy burden and bore the patient below. What impressed them most was the calm yet deliberate way in which the lads went about their work: no fuss, no noise, no questions. It was an object lesson on "Being Prepared."

"Who will volunteer to remain with me with the patient?" asked Mr Carter. "No—not all of you—one only. You, Hornsby. The others must now turn in: it's nearly ten o'clock."

Just before five on the following morning, Mr Carter came on deck for a breath of fresh air. Here he found Osborne, Penarth, M'Kane, Summers and Webb, all with their boots and stockings off and their shorts rolled up, and armed with squeegees and mops. The deck-hands of the "Lady Edith" were having a "stand-easy," for the Sea Scouts were getting their hand in by scrubbing down the decks.

"How is the patient, sir?" asked the Leader.

"Doing capitally. He will be landed at Plymouth."

"That won't be much longer, sir," announced the Tenderfoot. "We're off Bolt Head now."

"How do you know that, Tom?"

"I asked one of the crew, sir. We'll soon see the place where the 'Jebbah' went ashore a few years ago."

Less than two miles off on the starboard hand rose the frowning cliffs of Devon, fringed by an irregular line of milk-white foam.

"What makes all that surf, sir?" asked M'Kane. "It's fairly calm out here."

"The swell breaking against the sheer cliff," said Mr Carter. "You frequently find it like that on rocky coasts even in fine weather. We'll try to give it a wide berth when we bring the 'Petrel' past this part of the coast."

"Shall I give Hornsby a spell, sir?" asked Osborne.

"It would be as well: he may snatch a few hours' sleep before breakfast."

"How about you, sir?"

"Oh, I'll hang on a bit longer," replied the Scoutmaster with a smile. "Thanks all the same, I'm fairly used to this sort of business. Now, don't let me keep

you from your work, or the 'deckies' will think that Sea Scouts don't know how to carry out a job properly."

With this admonition Mr Carter moved towards the companion-ladder. Then he stopped and pointed to a distant object on the port bow: a needle-like shaft rising out of the sea.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"It is the Eddystone, sir," replied the lads in chorus.

"How did you know?" demanded Mr Carter somewhat taken aback by the unanimity of the answer.

"We looked it up on the chart, sir. The mate showed us a chart and let us find our position by cross-bearings. We had just shut in Start Point by Prawle Point, so it was fairly easy."

Soon after seven, the "Lady Edith" passed the eastern end of the massive breakwater protecting Plymouth Sound, and moored alongside Millbay Pier. It was a glorious morning. The sun was shining brightly, and the Hoe presented a picture of absorbing interest, as the Scoutmaster pointed out the old Eddystone Lighthouse and the monument to the immortal Drake.

"Shall we be able to land, sir?" asked the Tenderfoot eagerly. "We want to see where Drake was playing bowls when the news of the approach of the Armada reached him."

"I think it can be arranged," replied Mr Carter. "The boat remains here for several hours. It's all new to me for I've only seen Plymouth from the water."

As soon as breakfast was over the patrol went ashore. Outside the dock gates the Sea Scouts found themselves in a long curving street, most of the houses being of stone.

"We must inquire——," began Mr Carter. Then he stopped suddenly and acknowledged a Scout's salute from a young fellow in private clothes on the other side of the road.

Without hesitation this "brother in a strange land" crossed over to where the Scouts stood.

"My name is Trevena; I am the Assistant Scoutmaster of the 31st Stonehouse Troop," he explained. "You are strangers here: can I be of any assistance?"

"We are ashore for a few hours and want to have a look round," replied Mr Carter. "Can you direct us to the Hoe?"

"Certainly. If you like I will take you round to see the principal sights. I am quite at liberty for the time being. Are you on your own boat?"

"No, we are on our way to Falmouth. In a week or so we hope to put into Plymouth on our own craft—an eight-ton ketch. We are sailing her back to Portsmouth Harbour: we're Gosport Sea Scouts, and Gosport is on one side of Portsmouth Harbour."

"Let me know when you put into Plymouth Sound and my Troop will give you a real good Devonshire welcome. We are off to Bovisand the day after to-morrow for a fortnight's camp. I'll try and arrange for our sports to take place on the day you pay us a visit."

Under Mr Trevena's guidance the hasty tour was completely successful. The lads ascended the old Eddystone Lighthouse, enjoyed "hearing the band on the Hoe and seeing the Sound"—a time-honoured joke on the part of the good folk of Plymouth—and saw the stone marking the place of departure of the Pilgrim Fathers. A tram ride through the "Three Towns" brought their first visit to Plymouth to a close.

"And don't forget to let me know," remarked Mr Trevena after he had received the hearty thanks of the Sea Scouts. "I'll guarantee a rousing welcome from our lads. Good-bye and a pleasant voyage."

"If there is anything in good wishes—and I feel certain there is," soliloquised Mr Carter, "the success of our expedition is already assured."

CHAPTER VI

THE CORNISH WELCOME

THE "Lady Edith's" stay at Plymouth was a short one. Consequently it was not later than noon when she cast off and headed towards the western passage between the Breakwater and Mount Edgcumbe.

During the remainder of the voyage to Falmouth the rugged and picturesque Cornish coast remained in view the whole time, so that the Scouts had plenty of opportunity to note the characteristics of the various headlands in order that they might recognise them when they were solely responsible for the navigation of the "Petrel."

In a blaze of sunlight the steamer rounded St Anthony's Point, and the vast expanse of Falmouth Harbour burst into sight.

Under the shadow of grey Pendennis Castle a long jetty ran in a northerly direction. It was towards this that the "Lady Edith" steered.

"Can you see the 'Petrel,' sir?" asked Summers eagerly.

"No, my lad. Not knowing what she's like it is a matter of impossibility to pick her up in the maze of shipping. There are dozens of two-sticked craft moored off the town. Keep your soul in patience a few hours longer."

Slowly circling, the steamer made for the western side of the jetty. The deckhands were already preparing the hawsers ready for making fast.

"Look, there are Scouts on the Pierhead," exclaimed Penarth. "Dozens of them in grey and dark green shirts."

As the Second uttered these words there was a commotion ashore, and a little forest of stetsons on staves waved in the air to the accompaniment of a ringing cheer.

"How extraordinary," remarked Mr Carter. "It can't be—but who else should they be cheering? They must have found out somehow. Lads, line up and give them a good old cheer."

Nearer and nearer, though very slowly, the "Lady Edith" approached her mooring berth. Mr Carter, who had been busy with his glasses, touched the Leader on the shoulder.

"Just look through these a moment," he said, handing his binoculars to him. "That fellow standing on the right slightly in advance of the rest."

"It's a Sea Scout," announced Osborne. "Yes—why, it's Ernest Reid."

"I thought so, too," added Mr Carter. "But are you quite sure?"

"Certain of it, sir; listen: that's our patrol call."

"It's Reid," shouted Tenderfoot Webb. "How did he get here? And there are quite a dozen Troops on the jetty."

As soon as the gangway was made fast Mr Carter led the patrol ashore, amid a babel of voices yelling their respective patrol calls.

"Welcome to Falmouth, Mr Carter," exclaimed a tall, bronzed Cornishman attired in Scoutmaster's warpaint. "We've been expecting you, you see."

"And we appreciate the compliment, Mr Kenwyn," replied the Scoutmaster of the "Seals" when the Falmouth Scoutmaster had announced his name and had introduced the new arrivals to a group of Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters. "How did you know anything about us?"

"To be brief. Polgerrick, the yachtbuilder, told us

that a yacht lying here had to be handed over to a patrol of Sea Scouts from Gosport, and last night this lad—Reid, I think, is his name—called at our headquarters, as he was an entire stranger to Falmouth."

"So you managed it all right, Reid?" asked Mr Carter.

"Yes, sir," replied the beaming lad. "My people changed their minds. I was afraid of missing the boat at Southampton so I came right on here by train. The Scouts at this place are awfully jolly. They put me up at their club-room, and fed me till I felt like a young turkey-cock."

"Where do you propose to stay to-night?" asked Scoutmaster Kenwyn.

"On board the yacht was my intention," replied Mr Carter.

"I don't think I would," was the rejoinder. "All her gear is in rather a muddle down below. I went and had a look at her this morning. Why don't you let your fellows shake down in our club-room? I can put you up without any fuss at my place."

"Thanks awfully," said Mr Carter gratefully.

"Then get your lads together," added Mr Kenwyn. "Lions! Forward with that trek-cart."

Up rattled the "Lions'" cart. A dozen willing hands placed the Gosport Sea Scouts' kit-bags into it.

"Patrols! By the right—quick march."

At the head of the column a drum and fife band blared out lustily, and almost before they were aware of it the "Seals" found themselves in the centre of an orderly procession of brother Scouts. It was so unexpected, so demonstrative, and so genuine—this Cornish welcome—that they could hardly credit their senses.

Past the head of the docks and into the long, narrow winding High Street, the Scouts marched bravely till

they reached a wide open space flanked on either side by a steep rock on which houses seemed to be built wherever the faintest suspicion of a ledge would afford a foundation.

"Here are our local headquarters," explained Mr Kenwyn, pointing to a large stone building. "No, not the ground floor, that's a joiner's shop. We'll dismiss the other Troops now, but I'll keep the 11th on duty."

As soon as the "Seals'" baggage was carried into the club-room, the Gosport Sea Scouts were invited to tea. The room was decorated with flags, two trestle-tables occupied a portion of the floor, and strongly-constructed chairs—the work of the local Scouts—were placed in readiness. As for the tables, they were a picture of appetising delight to the guests, who, fresh from a sea voyage, were eager to set to. There were tea and coffee, large brown loaves, creamy butter—made by the neighbouring Penryn Scouts—cakes and Cornish pasties, and an abundance of Cornish cream.

Over the meal, tongues were loosened, and the Hampshire Sea Scouts and the Cornish Scouts were soon the best of pals. One might have thought they had known each other for years.

After the tea-things had been removed and all hands had made short work of "washing-up," the lads indulged in games till they were surprised to hear Mr Kenwyn announce that it was half-past nine and time for their guests to enjoy their well-earned rest.

Twenty minutes later, silence reigned in the club-room. Seven forms, rolled in blankets, lay almost motionless on the floor. The "Seals" were spending their first night on the hospitable Cornish soil.

At six on the following morning, the Sea Scouts were awakened by their new-found chums, who had promised to take them for a bathe. Twenty minutes later the lads were splashing, swimming, diving and

enjoying themselves, having harmless pranks in the clear, bracing water off Gyllngvase Beach, where the waves break straight in from the English Channel and there are no treacherous currents to trap the unwary.

After breakfast, Mr Carter appeared upon the scene, looking as enthusiastic as the youngest member of the Troop.

"Had a good night?" he asked. "That's well; now for Polgerrick's yacht-yard."

It was not a great distance, and Polgerrick's establishment being situated on the shore of the harbour, and within a few yards of the Prince of Wales' pier, the din of caulkers' hammers and the pleasant reek of tar and oakum left little doubt as to the nature of the business the genial old Cornishman carried on.

"So you are the young gents as has come to take Mr Dacres' yacht away? Well, she is nearly ready; wants a few hours' work to make her all shipshape. There she be."

Polgerrick pointed to a white ketch lying on moorings a short distance from the end of the slipway. It was the "Seals'" own craft—the yacht "Petrel."

CHAPTER VII

A CAPSIZE

"Is she really ours, sir?" asked M'Kane, almost lost in wonderment. It seemed just like a dream. In their wildest hopes the "Seals" had never conjured up such a craft as this. After the "Petrel" their old cutter, the "Porpoise," paled into insignificance.

What they saw was an able-looking craft about thirty feet in length, with ample beam and a generous amount of free-board. She was of a whaler type—pointed both ends. Her cabin top of polished teak was fairly low so as not to offer much resistance to the wind when beating in a strong breeze. Her masts were newly varnished and gave the impression of being of great strength, while her wire and hempen rigging looked bran new.

"There she be, sir," continued Polgerrick. "An' I'm main certain you gents want to get aboard. Yon's her dinghy: the one with the centreboard. When you'm ready, Mr Carter, I'll come off and we'll run through the inventory together, so as to be all fair and above board. I haven't put the sails aboard yet, sir. I thought as perhaps you'd be having them tanned. It'll save a mort o' trouble and worry."

"We'll see about that later on," replied the Scoutmaster, scarcely able to conceal his impatience to get on board.

The dinghy, though only "twelve-foot six" in length, was capable of taking eight persons without overcrowding. A few strokes were sufficient to bring her neatly alongside the parent craft.

"My word! What a muddle!" exclaimed Hornsby,

peering down into the cabin. "Whatever did the boatbuilder want to leave everything out like that?"

"It's a case of desirability—almost, I might say, necessity," explained Mr Carter. "You see the yacht is strange to us. If everything were stowed away we wouldn't know where to find anything. On the other hand, by stowing away the gear ourselves we ought to know—and I daresay we will know—where each article is when it's wanted. Now, lads, off boots. It's either bare feet or rubber-soled shoes when you are on board. Penarth and Hornsby will give me a hand in getting the cabin presentable. M'Kane and Summers, you go ashore and fill up the water-breakers."

"How about the sails, sir?" asked M'Kane. "I know how they are tanned. I've often watched old Sampson on Haslar Beach."

"Well, if you think you can make a decent job of it you can carry on this very morning. No doubt Mr Polgerrick will supply you with the necessary stuff, and keep an eye on the work. Summers will lend you a hand. When Mr Polgerrick comes off to go through the inventory with me, you, Osborne, can take charge of the dinghy. Penarth and Webb can go with you. There are some lines in my bag; get some bait and try your hand at fishing."

"I know where there's a good place, sir," announced the Tenderfoot. "It's in Mylor Pool, about a couple of miles off. Dick Trehalla told me about it last night."

"Very well, then; be careful, Osborne. You'll be inside the harbour all the time."

In high spirits the crew of the dinghy prepared for their trip. The mast was stepped, and the sail—a standing lug—set and bowsed down. The Leader took the helm, and held the mainsheet in his hand, Penarth stood by the centreboard, while the Tenderfoot was told off to tend the jib-sheets.

"She's as handy as a top, sir," sang out Osborne, as he manœuvred the dinghy round the "Petrel." "She comes about in less than no time."

"All right—carry on," replied the Scoutmaster. He knew that the Leader's seamanship was quite satisfactory, and that the lad was capable of being put in charge.

The wind was south-west and dead astern ; nevertheless Osborne wisely refrained from lifting the centreplate. "Running" is always the most tricky point of sailing, and with a comparatively strange craft it was undesirable to risk an accidental gybe for the sake of a slight additional speed.

The lads hardly spoke a word, so enthralled were they with the novelty of the scene and the fact that they were entirely "on their own." The dinghy ran well, leaving a clean wake astern, while the water rippled under her sharp bows with the soothing sound that appeals to the sailors of small craft.

Off Trefusis Point the course enabled the mainsheet to be hauled home a few inches, and the possibility of a gybe was now out of the question. The tide was flowing, being an hour after low water, so that progress was rapid.

"Here we are," said Webb. "This must be the place—just off the first creek on the port hand, Trehalla said."

Throwing the dinghy up into the wind the lads lowered sail and dropped anchor in about two fathoms. The lines were brought out and baited, and the fun commenced.

There was plenty of sport, especially compared with fishing in the petrol-tainted waters of Portsmouth Harbour, where to hook a fish is rather the exception than the rule. In less than an hour there were a dozen and a half large-sized pollock and whiting lying on the bottom-boards, besides a score of smaller fry.

"Wind's freshening," observed Osborne, giving a critical eye to windward. "We've almost a dead beat back against a foul tide. We ought to be making a move if we want to get back to the 'Petrel' by twelve."

"Werry good, skipper," said Penarth, touching his hat with mock servility.

"Then hurry up and get your lines in," added the Leader.

"I've hooked a whopper," exclaimed Webb. "I can't get my line in another inch. Bear a hand, Harold."

Penarth went to the Tenderfoot's assistance. There was something tugging so lustily that Webb was obliged to take a turn round a cleat lest the line should cut into his fingers.

"Are you sure your line's not foul of a rock and it's the jump of the boat you feel?" asked Osborne.

"No," replied the Tenderfoot. "It's sheering all over the place."

Slowly the line came inboard, stretched almost to breaking point. The commotion was now very evident upon the surface of the water. The excitement was intense.

"A shark," ejaculated Penarth. "That's what it is. Where's your knife, Osborne?"

The Leader, knife in hand, waited for the fish's head to appear over the gunwale, while the other lads slowly hauled in the line.

Suddenly the fish changed its tactics. Possibly realising that it was useless to struggle against the upward pull it leapt out of the water. Penarth and Webb sat down on the bottom of the dinghy; Osborne cut at the fish's neck, and missed. The next instant the huge creature—it was over a yard in length—was floundering violently in the boat, snapping furiously with its sharp teeth. It was a dog-fish, the "first cousin" to the shark.

In a trice the Second and the Tenderfoot were up. A row of sharp file-like teeth act as a powerful incentive when one has bare feet. Penarth took refuge on the bow-grating while the Tenderfoot sat on the middle thwart and dangled his legs over the side. The dog-fish by this time had the lines in a regular tangle as it snapped at everything within reach.

"Get an oar and hit him over the head," shouted Webb.

"No, you don't," said the Leader peremptorily. "Keep where you are: don't wriggle or you'll capsize the boat."

Osborne waited his opportunity, and with a sweep of his keen knife nicked the dog-fish just behind the head. The danger was over, although the creature still writhed.

"Clear up that mess," ordered the Leader. "Hurry up, it's blowing pretty fresh now."

"Why did you tell me not to use the oar?" asked the Tenderfoot, as he busied himself with untangling and coiling up the line. "I could have hit him nicely."

"If you had missed you would have more than likely knocked a hole through the bottom of the boat," replied Osborne. "I've heard of that being done before now. It doesn't take much to start a plank from the inside, you know."

As soon as the boat began to look shipshape the sails were hoisted and the anchor broken out and taken on board. Directly Penarth had lowered the centre-plate, he sat on the bottom-board to windward and began to thread the fish on a piece of cord.

"Don't cleat those jib-sheets," cautioned Osborne, addressing the Tenderfoot. "Hold them in your hand, and let go sharp if I give you the word. It's short tacks now."

Under the lee of Penarrow Point the wind swept down from the hills in irregular gusts. Several times

OSBORNE CUT AT THE FISH'S NECK AND MISSED

the Leader had to down helm and luff to ease the pressure on the canvas.

Suddenly a vicious squall struck the dinghy. Osborne, shouting to the Tenderfoot to let fly the jib-sheets, let go the mainsheet and attempted to put the craft into the wind.

Smartly the Tenderfoot obeyed orders, but the rope, swollen with the spray, would not render through the jamb-cleat. Simultaneously the main-sheet obstinately refused to run through the block. In a moment the water was pouring in a cascade over the lee gunwale.

The dinghy partially righted herself, but only for a brief instant. Over she went on her beam ends, and the three Scouts found themselves in the water.

Osborne's first act was to satisfy himself that his companions were not under the sail. Webb was swimming a few yards away, while Penarth was hanging on to the gunwale that was projecting a few inches above the water.

Now was the time to put theory to a practical test. The lads had often been told what to do in a case like this. Coolness and united action alone could save the situation.

While the Tenderfoot swam round the waterlogged craft and retrieved various articles that had floated clear, the Leader let go the main and jib halliards. Penarth rolled the jib into a small compass and lashed it to the short iron bowsprit, while Osborne furled the lugsail, unshipped the mast, and secured them to the thwarts.

Relieved of the weight of the sails the dinghy floated right way up, with her stem-head and the upper edge of her transom well above water, the lowermost part of her sheer being just awash.

"Overboard with that anchor," ordered Osborne. "Be careful it doesn't catch in your pocket, or down you'll go."

The anchor, still made fast by the hempen cable, was quickly dropped. Relieved of this weight the dinghy floated a little higher than before.

"In you nip, Webb," said the Leader. "Sit on the bottom-boards and bale for all you're worth."

As the Tenderfoot scrambled over the gunwale the dinghy sank a few inches, but as soon as he had taken up the position indicated by his superior and kept his head only above water, the boat regained its former level.

For quite five minutes, Webb baled vigorously, yet with no apparent result. No water was coming over the gunwales, and the Tenderfoot was throwing a lot out. Yet the dinghy showed no signs of emptying.

"Can't see any difference," admitted Osborne, when Penarth asked his opinion. "It's very strange."

"Can we swim to the shore and tow her with us?" asked the Second.

"Not with this tide," replied the Leader, considerably mystified because practice had not borne out theory.

There was not another craft in sight. The lads had to work out their own salvation. If it came to the point they could easily swim ashore, for the nearest land was less than a hundred and fifty yards off; but it went against the grain to abandon the dinghy.

"Any of you fellows feeling cold?" asked Osborne.

"Not I," replied Penarth, while Webb declared that he was as warm as anything.

"Let's have another shot at it," suggested the Leader. "Bale away, Webb."

Still there was no result. Not an additional inch of planking showed above the water.

Suddenly Osborne give a whoop of delight.

"Kick me for a silly ass, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

"Why—what's up?" asked Penarth.

"We've forgotten the centreboard. The water runs

in through the slot as fast as Webb bales out. Off with your scarfs, you fellows. Webb, take hold of them and stuff them in the slot of the centreboard trunk. Ram them down hard. That's so—now bale away."

In a very few minutes the dinghy showed signs of lifting, and presently she was sufficiently buoyant to allow Penarth to cautiously clamber in over the transom.

The two lads continued the task the Tenderfoot had commenced, and by means of the baler and Penarth's cap the rest of the water was got rid of. Not till then did Osborne leave the water.

"Up with the mast again," he exclaimed cheerily. "We'll be on the safe side and take in a reef, though I can't for the life of me imagine why she capsized. Hulloa! Why, that's what did the mischief."

The Leader held up a part of the mainsheet. In it was embedded the head of a fishing-hook, while the shank effectually prevented the rope from running through the block.

"What have you young rascals been up to?" asked Mr Carter, as the three dripping Sea Scouts came alongside the "Petrel." "You've picked up something more than spray."

"We have, sir," replied the Leader. "The dinghy capsized, but everything is all right. We have lost none of the gear."

"That's one good thing: but how did it happen?"

While the lads were changing into dry clothing under an awning over the cockpit, Osborne explained exactly what had occurred.

"You did very well," declared the Scoutmaster when the Leader concluded his narrative. "It was lucky for you that the water was fairly smooth. Now, hang your wet things up in the rigging and get below. I want your opinion of how the cabin looks."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST NIGHT ON THE "PETREL"

DOWN below everything was spick and span. Polgerrick had been on board and had checked off the inventory in conjunction with Mr Carter, and the spare gear and stores had been examined. The Scoutmaster, Reid and Hornsby had been responsible for the clearing up below decks, and a highly satisfactory job they had made of it.

A cheerful-looking linoleum covered the cabin floor. Dark blue curtains were fixed over the open shelves and across the two scuttles; cushions of the same colour had been placed upon the sidelockers forming comfortable settees. Against the for'ard bulkhead a clock, barometer and thermometer made a grand show, the brasswork gleaming in the mellow light that streamed in through the skylight.

In the fo'c'sle the galley had been polished up, the pots and pans scoured and stowed in racks, and the litter of spare ropes, warps, mops and buckets consigned to invisible yet easily accessible quarters.

"You have been hard at it, sir," exclaimed Osborne, enthusiastically. "But where are we going to sleep? There are a couple of cots in the fo'c'sle, and a bed can be made up on each bunk. That accounts for four of us."

"I've been going into that question," replied Mr Carter. "The former owners of the 'Petrel' slept in folding cots placed a few inches over the bunks. I am going to raise these sockets sufficiently to allow one to sleep on each bunk and another on the cot three feet or so above the settee."

"I see, like they do on board large ships," said the Tenderfoot.

"Exactly. Well, that accounts for six of us. Webb, being the smallest of the lot, can sleep in the after locker. There's plenty of room and plenty of air, and a fairly thick cushion to keep his delicate little bones off the hard boards."

"Hurrah, you chaps!" exclaimed the Tenderfoot. "I've a cabin to myself."

"A precious small one, I can assure you," added Mr Carter with a laugh. "Now, I'm the only one left to consider: what's to be done with poor me?"

"Sleep in the dinghy, sir," suggested the irrepressible Tenderfoot, with a broad grin on his plump features.

"Thanks, I draw the line at that: you might capsize her while I'm sound asleep," rejoined the Scoutmaster. "I have reason to believe that the dinghy is quite capable of being capsized. No, I'm going to sling a hammock in the cockpit, with the awning spread overhead. Of course, if it's a very wet and gusty night I'll have the hammock slung in the cabin."

"Won't we be like sardines in a box, sir," exclaimed Penarth. "Hip! hip! hurrah! for the sardines."

"Nothing to get excited about," said Webb. "I don't suppose it's the first time that sardines have been inside a petrel."

"You'll get slung out of the 'Petrel' if you don't behave yourself," exclaimed Osborne, making a grab at the Tenderfoot.

Webb promptly dodged into the fo'c'sle, while the Leader, overbalancing himself, sat down upon a plate of toast that Mr Carter had just removed from the grill.

"Sardines on toast, this time," yelled the Tenderfoot. "Osborne, you ought to be more careful. I don't believe you've found your sea-legs yet."

"I'll give you cause to forget you ever had any,"

answered Osborne with mock severity. "Wait till I catch you."

Up the forehatch scrambled the Tenderfoot, with the Leader hard after him. Before Osborne gained the deck, Webb was at the head of the companion-ladder, ready to dive below and repeat the performance.

"Talk about 'Follow my Leader'; it's my Leader following me," shouted the Tenderfoot. "Come along, Osborne, don't stand there in the cold."

"That's enough for the present," remarked the Scoutmaster after a while. "Penarth and Reid, get the dinner things out; you, Osborne, see to the stove. Webb, row ashore and bring off M'Kane and Summers. They are still at work in the yard."

The Tenderfoot set off on his errand, leaving his comrades busy below with the exception of Hornsby, who, as holder of a fisherman's badge, had undertaken the work of cleaning the fish that the dinghy's crew had brought back.

At half-past twelve—or at one bell, as the Sea Scouts insisted upon the proper nautical term—all hands sat down to their first meal on board the "Petrel." It could not be said that the cabin was spacious: some might have well described it as crowded, but the "Seals" cared not one jot. All were as cheerful and contented as true Scouts should be.

M'Kane and his assistant had made good progress with their tanning operations. The mainsail and the mizzen had been finished and hung out to dry. Only the staysail and two jibs remained to be done.

"Mr Polgerrick said we were getting along splendidly," announced Summers proudly. "All being well the sails will be ready to be bent to-morrow afternoon."

"We'll be all shipshape on board by then," said Mr Carter. "If it is fine weather we may as well have

a trial trip. It is necessary before putting out on our homeward voyage."

"When do we start for home, sir?" asked Reid, "not that I am anxious to get away from Falmouth. It's too fine for words."

"All being well, we'll start early on Monday morning," replied the Scoutmaster. "We are in no immediate hurry, although I should like to reach Mevagissey by eleven o'clock in the morning."

"Mevagissey — what a curious name," remarked Hornsby.

"And a curious little place it is by all accounts," answered Mr Carter. "There's a regatta to be held outside the harbour, and that's why I wanted to get round there. Mr Kenwyn told me that the Sea Scouts of Mevagissey, Charlestown and Par are taking part in the races."

"Shall we be able to go in for any of the races, sir?"

"I do not know: we must wait till we see the conditions. In any case, I know you will like to see how your brother Sea Scouts fare in the event. But we must not waste time, for I want to fix the bunks this afternoon. Clear the things, lads."

By the aid of plenty of hot water and soda the greasy plates were quickly washed up. This done the "Seals" applied themselves to the various duties entrusted to them till tea-time.

The interval between this meal and supper was spent ashore, the Sea Scouts being shown round the town and the delightful country in its vicinity by their attentive chums, the Falmouth Scouts.

At ten o'clock, bedding was unrolled, cots made up and hammocks slung. The Tenderfoot was told off to the locker, Penarth and Summers to the fo'c'sle, and the rest of the lads to the cabin. Undressing in the latter place was a matter of difficulty, especially as the

gentle motion of the yacht made that operation an awkward one.

"All right below there?" asked Mr Carter from his hammock in the cockpit.

"Yes, sir."

"Then out with the light."

Ten minutes later, silence reigned on board the good ship "Petrel," but only as far as the crew were concerned. Each lad was wide awake listening to the medley of strange noises to which they were as yet unaccustomed. The flapping of the halliards against the masts, the groaning of the rudder as the flowing tide caused it to sway to and fro, the grinding of the cable against the yacht's forefoot all combined to keep the lads from falling to sleep. But silence had been enjoined and silence must be maintained in spite of the desire to ask the Scoutmaster what was the cause of this variety of sounds.

Snugly wrapped in his blanket, Mr Carter was the first to fall asleep, the gentle swaying of the hammock acting as a powerful inducement to forget the day of hard yet pleasurable toil.

Suddenly he was awakened by a fearful yell followed by a babel of exclamations from the cabin. Springing out of his hammock the Scoutmaster seized his ever-handy electric torch and flashed it down the companion. The cabin was one writhing mass of humanity.

Hornsby and M'Kane were rolling on the floor, with Summers and Penarth—who had rushed in from the fo'c'sle—on top of them; while on the starboard bunk Reid was lying on his back trying his uttermost to ward off Osborne's heels which were apparently attempting to beat a tattoo on the former's face.

"Pull yourselves together, lads," ordered the Scoutmaster sharply. "Summers, get a lamp from the

fo'c'sle, the torch is too dazzling. Whatever is the meaning of this commotion?"

The Scouts soon sorted themselves out, and by the aid of the lamp the cause of the stampede became apparent. In the first place, the lacings of Osborne's cot had broken, and the canvas giving way on one side, dropped the Leader very neatly upon Reid who was fast asleep on the lower bunk. The canvas interposing between the two lads effectually imprisoned Osborne and prevented him from rolling off his chum's body, while his heels were pounding the luckless Reid's face.

Suddenly wakened out of a profound sleep by the outcry, M'Kane started up. Being on the lower bunk on the port side his head came in violent contact with Hornsby's back. That Scout was jerked out of his cot on to the cabin floor, and in falling he had frantically grabbed M'Kane and dragged him from his bunk. Summers and Penarth, alarmed at the uproar, leapt from their folding cots, and in the confined space in the fo'c'sle must needs bang their heads together, following up this unappreciated action by tripping over Hornsby and M'Kane as soon as they entered the cabin.

"Keep smiling, you fellows," sung out the Tenderfoot, who had emerged from his sleeping-quarters and was peeping through the skylight.

"I'd like to see you smile after Osborne had put his foot into your mouth," ejaculated Reid, then, realising the humour of the situation, he burst into a roar of laughter in which his companions heartily joined.

With the least possible delay, a fresh lashing was procured for Osborne's cot, and once more the Seal Patrol settled down to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

M'KANE'S TAN SAILS

AT six o'clock the Sea Scouts' slumber was disturbed by the shrill pipe of the bosun's whistle—ably manipulated by Mr Carter.

"Show a leg, show a leg and shine!" he shouted, using the old sea-call to bring the men from their hammocks. "Pipe all hands to bathe."

Summers was first on deck. Without hesitation, he placed his feet on the rail and took a clean header into the water, quickly followed by the rest of his comrades, till the eight members of the Seal Patrol—Scoutmaster included—were doing their very best to emulate the amphibious animal from which they derived their name.

"How are we going to get back, sir?" asked Webb, for the yacht's freeboard was too great to allow anyone in the water to grasp the edge of the covering-board. "Oughtn't we to have left a rope hanging overboard?"

"Don't you think it's rather too late to propose doing that now?" asked Mr Carter. "Never mind: swim to the bows of the yacht and get on board by means of the bobstay."

In the case of the "Petrel" the "bobstay" or stay from the waterline to the bowsprit end was bowsed taut, the "standing part" being composed of a bar of copper. The Tenderfoot found that this bar formed a very convenient step for getting on board, and his companions profited by his example.

"What a ripping bathe, sir," remarked Summers,

"No wading down a pebbly beach, but straight off into deep water."

"That is so," agreed the Scoutmaster. "But don't you think that it was rather a risky thing to jump overboard without hesitation, as you did just now?"

"No, sir," replied the Scout. "Why? It's no use to stand shivering in the wind, when the water is so warm."

"Quite so. But suppose there had been a strong tide running. You might all be swept astern and be unable to get back."

"But you were there, sir," replied Summers confidently, "or I would have stopped to watch things floating by and so judge the rate of the tide."

"That is what I did do," said Mr Carter. "Before I called you I saw to that. I appreciate your trust in me, Summers, but I might have omitted to take this simple precaution. Now, up with the bedding and give it a good airing. Cooks to the galley. Reid, you will be dinghy-man for to-day, so row M'Kane ashore to fetch the milk. While you are there, M'Kane, look in at the post office and see if there are any letters for yacht 'Petrel.'"

Just as breakfast was ready the dinghy returned, M'Kane bringing a pile of letters for all hands and a large parcel addressed to Mr Carter. There were communications from parents, relatives and brother Scouts at home: none of the crew of the "Petrel" had the doleful experience of being "left out in the cold."

"What's this, I wonder?" asked the Scoutmaster, as he proceeded to untie the cords of the parcel. When the paper wrappings were removed a red ensign, a complete set of signal flags and a code signal book were revealed.

"Whoever sent this?" continued Mr Carter, in obvious perplexity. The wrapper gave no indication of the

sender, but the address left no doubt that the parcel was intended for him.

"Unless there are two 'Petrels' and two Carters in Falmouth Harbour," he added. "It's a very useful gift, lads, and a valuable one. The code book alone costs a guinea."

"Perhaps Mr Dacres sent it, sir," suggested Osborne.

"Yes; but I have a letter from him posted from Ostend, and he makes no mention of sending a parcel."

"There's an envelope, sir," announced Penarth. "It was inside the code book."

Mr Carter opened the flap. On a sheet of notepaper bearing the name and address of the Steamship Company to which the "Lady Edith" belonged were the words, "A slight token of esteem in recognition of services rendered to a fellow-passenger on board the S.S. 'Lady Edith.' Aug. 19—," and signed by two of the directors of the Company.

"That is for doing a good turn to that fellow who had a fit on board," said Summers.

"I suppose so," assented the Scoutmaster. "All the same it seems out of proportion to what we actually did."

"They evidently don't think so, sir," observed Osborne. "The mate of the vessel told me that if the man had died it would cost the company a lot of money, for the captain and some of the crew would have to attend the inquest, the ship would be delayed or else a temporary captain appointed, and no end of trouble and expense."

"Now we are well set up in the signalling line," declared Mr Carter. "No doubt the flags will come in very useful. As for the ensign, we'll hoist it at the proper hour—eight o'clock—and run our patrol flag—or burgee as we must now term it—up to the masthead."

Just before noon, M'Kane and Summers went ashore to fetch the sails.

"They are quite dry, sir," announced the former upon their return.

"Very good, we'll bend the mainsail and mizzen at once. Osborne, you know how to lace a sail properly; so that should a part of the lacing break, the rest will jam and prevent the sail from becoming unbent."

"Rather, sir," replied the Leader. "I took good care to lace my cot to the frame that way. One tumble out of bed is enough for me, sir."

"It is more than enough for me," added Reid, whose face bore traces of the nocturnal encounter.

"You'll get over it," said Mr Carter condolingly. "Now, Osborne, take three hands with you and tackle the mizzen; I'll bend the mainsail. Yes, M'Kane, the tan certainly seems to have dried very nicely."

It took an hour's hard work to bend sails, and by that time it was nearly three o'clock.

"Are we going out to-day, sir?" asked Summers.

"Not outside the harbour. With the wind in the direction and an ebb tide we might have some difficulty to get back. We'll hoist sail, however, and have a run up the river. There's plenty of wind, and a promise of more to come, judging by the glass."

Having "told-off" the crew to their respective stations, the Scoutmaster gave the order to make sail, cautioning the lads to take particular care to note where each halliard was made fast and that the "falls" were properly coiled away.

"That won't do, Webb, my boy," he exclaimed, as he watched the Tenderfoot struggling with the rebellious coils of the mizzen throat halliard. "You're coiling the wrong way; that's not cable-laid rope you're handling but 'four-strand,' so coil it with the sun, or in the same direction as the movement of the hands of a clock. There, that's better, the rope almost falls into position of its own accord."

"Going to take in a reef, sir?" asked Osborne.

"No, not at present. I want to see what she'll do. If there is a weak spot it's better to find out in a sheltered harbour before we start on our homeward voyage than to get into difficulties in the English Channel. When we have been under way a little while we'll test the patent reefing gear. All ready, for'ard? Haul your staysail sheet to windward, M'Kane: that will pay her head off. Let go, there."

The mooring buoy dropped into the water. The "Petrel," no longer held captive by a heavy chain, forged ahead, rapidly gaining way and heeling gracefully to the stiff breeze.

The trial spin—it was only over to St Mawes on the eastern side of the harbour, and up as far as St Just Creek—was quite successful. The crew were quickly able to master the various duties assumed to them, while the "Petrel" was as handy as anyone could wish. In spite of the hard wind she carried all plain sail with ease, and even in the strongest gusts her lee planks were never awash.

On the homeward run the patent reefing gear was tried and found to work satisfactorily. Henceforth there would be no hard, nail-splitting tussle with the stiff canvas when it became necessary to "knock down a reef." It was one of those true labour-saving devices that are an untold boon to the toilers of the sea.

"Stand by with the boat-hook, M'Kane," ordered the Scoutmaster, as the "Petrel" neared the moorings. "Whip up the buoy as sharp as you can and take a turn round the bitts with the cable. I'll bring her up as gently as I can."

So saying, Mr Carter put the helm down and allowed the ketch to fly up into the wind. It was a neat manœuvre, but unfortunately he forgot that the heavily-

ballasted craft carried considerable more way than the open cutter he had been accustomed to.

Like a young racehorse the "Petrel" tore past the mooring-buoy. M'Kane, poising the boathook, grabbed the buoy and hauled it inboard, but before he could secure it, the cask was wrenched from his grasp.

"Hold on to it!" he yelled. Summers and Webb flew to his assistance, the Tenderfoot seizing the buoy rope with one hand and clutching at the forestay with the other.

"Let go!" shouted Mr Carter. Webb did let go, but with the wrong hand. The next moment he was floundering in the water with the buoy bobbing up and down a few feet from him.

Osborne and Hornsby immediately jumped into the dinghy to rescue their comrade, while the "Petrel," narrowly missing a yacht at anchor just ahead of her moorings, fell off the wind, gybed and prepared to have another shot at the elusive moorings.

At the second attempt the Scoutmaster underestimated the distance, and the yacht came to a standstill five yards from the buoy. The third essay was as futile, for the yacht's way was greater than on the first occasion, and Mr Carter wisely forbade M'Kane to attempt to get the buoy aboard.

"It's all practice," he explained. "We know the right thing to do, but we don't quite understand the peculiarities of the boat. Now, stand by there, for'ard; we'll have another shot."

This time the manœuvre came off as easily as A B C. The "Petrel" stopped almost on top of the buoy, and before she gathered sternway the for'ard hands had got the mooring-chain on board and secured it to the bitts.

As soon as this was done, the dinghy, which Osborne had judiciously kept clear of the yacht, came alongside, and Webb was able to change his clothes.

"Snug down as fast as you can, lads," ordered Mr Carter, giving a glance to windward. "There's plenty of rain about. It looks as if we are in for a dirty night. The wind has backed to the sou'west."

As the sun set in a yellow-coloured sky partly obscured by irregular indigo-clouds, the anchor-lamp was hoisted and the Sea Scouts retired to the cabin to spend the rest of the evening in yarning and playing games.

"Are you sleeping out in the cockpit to-night, sir?" asked Osborne. "It's raining hard now."

"Oh, yes. We are fairly sheltered here, and the awning is perfectly watertight," answered the Scoutmaster. "If we had omitted to rig the awning until after it had commenced to rain it would have been too uncomfortable. I'll be all right."

But half an hour after the crew had turned in, Mr Carter opened the cabin hatch.

"Don't turn out, lads," he remarked, as Osborne and M'Kane prepared to leave their bunks. "I'm going to sling my hammock down below. The awning isn't quite waterproof after all."

"I'll give you a hand, sir," said the Leader, sliding out of his elevated cot. "I'll get a light."

The Scoutmaster threw his blanket and the hammock into Osborne's arms and descended the ladder.

"Why, whatever have you done, sir?" asked the lad anxiously. "There's blood on your face."

"Is there? Perhaps it's the cut I gave myself while shaving this morning."

"But it's on your forehead, sir."

Mr Carter looked in the glass hanging over the wash-basin. His forehead and right cheek were covered with a deep stain.

"It's not blood," he declared. "It's tan from the sails. By Jove, what a mess there'll be in the morning."

By dint of much scrubbing, Mr Carter removed the dye from his face, and having slung his hammock he turned in filled with forebodings as to what the morrow would bring forth.

At six o'clock the sun was shining brightly. The rain-storm had passed away, and hardly a ripple disturbed the placid waters of Falmouth Harbour.

Tenderfoot Webb was first on deck. His exclamation of astonishment brought the rest tumbling through the fore-hatch and up the companion-ladder.

The decks, hitherto scrubbed to snowy whiteness, were streaked with a deep red dye, the cabin top resembled the floor of the butcher's shop, while down the enamelled sides of the yacht were vertical stripes of the same reddish hue, where the moisture had escaped through the scuppers.

M'Kane's patent method of tanning sails was evidently a failure, for the tan had "run" with the rain. Mops and scrubbing brushes were alike useless. On the wood and the paintwork the dye was as "fast" as it had been otherwise in the sails.

When Polgerrick came off the old man sat on the cabin top and scratched his head.

"Sure now," he exclaimed, "I'd never ha' believed it. The young gents were a-settin' to all right, so I let 'em alone."

"But I thought the tanning process was always a satisfactory one," said Mr Carter.

"Yes," replied the Cornish shipbuilder. "Now I knows. You ought to a' soaked the sails for an hour or more in salt water. In the main it's my fault. I ought to a' told 'em, but they were a-gettin' on so nicely that I thought as 'ow they knew all about it. So least said soonest mended."

"Then what's to be done, Polgerrick?"

"Rub all down with wet sand, sir; and paint the cabin

top again. As for the decks I'd scrub down an' give 'em a coat of varnish."

"And the sails?"

"Unbend 'em, sir, and dip 'em in salt water, or you'll have the same thing happen again every time it do come on to rain."

All that day the Sea Scouts were kept busily employed in making good the unsightly mess made by M'Kane's tanned sails, and before sunset the "Petrel" looked herself again.

"Now let's hope that's the last of the trouble," said Mr Carter. "To-morrow we'll have a trip round to Helford River and see how the yacht behaves in the open sea. Mr Kenwyn tells me that his lads are going to build a bridge across the upper part of the creek, so there will be an opportunity of seeing how the Cornish Scouts can work as well as play."

CHAPTER X

THE LIONS' BRIDGE

SATURDAY dawned fine and clear, with a spanking breeze from the north-west. As soon as breakfast was over and all made snug and tidy below decks, the order was given to hoist sails. Ten minutes later the "Petrel" was threading her way through the maze of yachts and heading towards the mouth of the harbour.

She was not alone. Close under her lee were two curiously-rigged sailing boats of about twenty-five feet in length and entirely open save for a short deck for'ard. They were yawl-rigged, the mizzen sheet being led through a block at the end of a span projecting as far over the square transom as the bowsprit did over the stern.

"Are those foreign craft, sir?" asked the Tenderfoot.

"No; they are Falmouth quay punts," replied Mr Carter. "It's rather remarkable that we haven't seen any before to-day."

"Quay punts!" repeated Webb. "Why, they are no more like punts than the 'Petrel.' A punt is a flat-bottomed kind of boat that a fellow pushes along with a pole—and often gets left hanging on to it."

"All the same these are 'quay punts,' and are known all over the world for seaworthiness. They'll overhaul us right enough."

"Can't we put on more sail, sir?"

"If you do you'll only have the additional chagrin of being beaten," replied Mr Carter.

As the nearmost one slowly but surely overhauled the "Petrel," the crew of the latter noticed that an old

bearded fisherman held the tiller. No one else on board was visible.

"Fine marnin', sir," sung out the helmsman. "Where be ye bound for?"

"Helford," replied the Scoutmaster.

"Sure, 'tes a nice easy sail, but du'ee keep well clear o' the Gedges when you'm gwine in." Then calling to some one under the foredeck, he announced:

"Garge, here be the Sea Scouts what you'm a-tellin' me about."

This announcement was followed by the appearance of two lads dressed in blue jerseys and trousers and red stocking caps.

"Good morning, sir," they shouted, giving the Scoutmaster the Scouts' salute.

"Good morning," replied Mr Carter. "So you are Scouts?"

"Yes, sir; North Falmouth Sea Scouts. We're off to the Manacles with grandfather to pick up lobster pots. After that, he's promised to take us to Navas Creek: that's where the Scouts are building their bridge, you know."

"Then we'll see something more of you later on," replied Mr Carter, and with another salute the Falmouth lads returned to their task of baiting their grandfather's lobster pots.

Passing between the Black Rock and Pendennis Castle, the "Petrel" gained the open sea. Here the Scoutmaster handed over the helm to Osborne, after giving him directions where to steer, while he went below to consult the chart.

"What's that buoy out there, Jack?" asked M'Kane, pointing in a southerly direction.

"I can't see a buoy," replied the Leader, shading his eyes from the glare of the sun.

"Neither can I now," added M'Kane. "But there is

one. I saw it through the telescope when I was up for'ard."

"What's that?" asked Mr Carter, who at that moment came on deck. "Oh, that must be the Manacles Buoy. We'll have a distant view of those dangerous rocks as we approach the entrance to Helford River. They'll look harmless enough now, but to see them in an on-shore gale is a sight too awe-inspiring for words. I've seen a vessel strike them and go to pieces in half an hour."

"Were you on board, sir?" asked Penarth.

"No, thank Heaven. I was staying for a holiday at Coverack, and saw the life-boat go out and bring off her crew. Four wrecks that same night occurred on this part of the coast. Now, Osborne, down helm. There's the entrance between those two hills."

"What a pretty river," exclaimed Summers, as the "Petrel" glided into the broad estuary enclosed on either side by lofty hills. "And look, sir, there are the coastguards rowing towards us."

"That's to see we are not smugglers," said Mr Carter. "Down with your headsails there. Anchor all ready to let go?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Penarth.

Into the wind turned the ketch, till she came to a standstill abreast of a smaller creek running in a northerly direction.

"Let go!" ordered the Scoutmaster.

With a loud rattle the cable flew out as the anchor plunged to the bottom. Sails were stowed and ropes coiled away, and barely was this done when the coast-guard boat came alongside.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed one of the men, "we know who you are. No need to rummage down below. All the same we must have particulars to go down in our book."

"That's Navas Creek, is it not?" asked Mr Carter, after he had given the required information.

"Yes, sir. The Scouts from Falmouth are there, only you can't see them from where you are lying. They've just borrowed a couple of handspikes from our chief officer."

"Our craft will be all right here, I hope?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Plenty of water. Three fathoms at low tide. Still, I'll give an eye to her while I'm on duty, and pass the word to my mate when he relieves me."

It was now nearly eleven o'clock, or one and three quarter hours before high water. Although sheltered by high ground there was a strong breeze down Navas Creek, causing the yacht to swing slightly athwart the tide.

"Haul the dinghy alongside, Webb," ordered Mr Carter. You've all taken provisions in your haversacks? That's right, for if not you'll feel jolly hungry before we get back."

"Aren't you leaving anyone on board, sir?" asked Osborne, giving an apprehensive glance at the wide-open door of the cabin.

"Oh, no; I don't think it necessary. Every one about here is honest, you know; besides, our coastguard friends promised to keep an eye on her."

"I wasn't thinking about thieves, sir; suppose it came on to rain?"

"Well, we'll close the sliding hatch, then very little rain will be able to beat in. Put the dinghy's mast and sail on deck here, Reid; they take up too much room, and the dinghy is too crowded to sail with safety. Now, tumble in, you lads."

The dinghy, with a full load, pushed off from the side of the "Petrel," Reid and M'Kane rowing. With the tide it was an easy pull up Navas Creek.

"There they are," said Summers, pointing to a swarm

of grey and khaki clad figures. "They've begun the bridge already."

The dinghy was run ashore close to the spot where the Falmouth Scouts were hard at work, and having seen her properly secured Mr Carter led the way to where Mr Kenwyn was directing operations.

"A novel sort of bridge," remarked the former, during the course of conversation.

"Yes, it's the idea of one of our lads: the Second of the 'Lions.' We are supposing for the time being that the opposite bank does not exist, and are throwing out a sort of pier. The difficulty is that the mud here is from twelve to fifteen feet in depth. How would you lads go about the job?" asked Mr Kenwyn, addressing the "Seals."

"I would cast bundles of brushwood for a foundation, sir," replied Osborne.

"But with the rising tide they would float away."

"I'd swim across with a rope and fix it to that tree. Then a kind of suspension bridge could be made."

"That won't do, my lad. We are supposing that the other bank is not there at present. Now watch what those fellows are doing."

On the ground lay a number of short planks about six feet in length. At rather less than a foot from each end was a hole three inches in diameter. There were also a number of old scaffold poles averaging twelve feet in length, each one having a "chock" fastened about five feet from one end. At present all the actual work of erection consisted of a short pole driven into the ground at the edge of the creek and "guyed" by three stout ropes. To the base of this was secured an old fishing-smack's gaff with the jaws preventing it from slipping. The gaff was hoisted by means of a tackle from the head of the upright pole till it formed an angle of forty-five degrees; the whole

making a substantial derrick, with a span of about twelve feet.

Through a pulley at the end of the derrick ran a three-inch rope to which was fixed a bosun's chair. At an order from the Cornish Scoutmaster one of the "Lions" sat in the chair, holding one of the flat boards on his knees.

"Haul out," called Mr Kenwyn, and the derrick swung outwards till the Scout was twelve feet from the bank.

"Look out for the splash, you fellows."

The warning was necessary, for with a dull thud the board was dropped flat upon the mud in a direction parallel with the shore.

Back swung the derrick, and one of the scaffold poles was handed to the Scout, who, on being hauled out once more, adroitly inserted one end in the hole in the board. The pole sank easily in the mud till "brought up" by the chock, thus forming an upright for the proposed pier. A similar post was driven in the second hole, and a cross-piece lashed between at two feet above the level of high water.

"I think I see the game now, sir," exclaimed Osborne. "You'll run out a couple of planks to that cross-bar, and carry on in the same manner till the bridge is complete."

"Quite right," assented Mr Kenwyn. "You've grasped the idea."

"But will those planks bear any weight in that soft mud," asked Summers.

"Don't ask silly questions, Summers," whispered M'Kane. "Of course they will."

"Why is it a silly question?" persisted Summers, thirsting for information.

"Haven't you seen men walking on mud-pattens in Portsmouth Harbour?" asked M'Kane.

"Yes, and I've done so myself," replied Summers.

Well, use your common sense. If two boards nine

inches square will support a man's weight, how much will a board six feet in length and a foot wide support?"

"They've finished the first pier: how do they set up the second one, sir?" asked Osborne.

"By using a stout plank twice the length of those already in position as a sort of cantilever. Three fellows will weigh it down this end while a Scout crawls along it with the 'foundation piece' for the second pier. We could, of course, set up the derrick again, but that would take too long."

In exactly an hour and forty minutes from the time of commencing the actual operations the bridge was completed, and the Sea Scouts and their Cornish chums crossed to the other side and had lunch. During the afternoon the County Commissioner and a number of friends interested in the movement came and inspected both the Scouts and their work, and Second Tregonnel of the "Lions"—the designer of the bridge—came in for special commendation for his ingenuity.

"We must be going, Kenwyn," said Mr Carter at length. "The tide is falling, and by the time we get under way it will be low water."

"You'll have a fair tide back to Falmouth," replied the Cornishman. "The wind is falling light, though. Well, I hope to see you at Falmouth to-morrow. Let me see, you are starting on Monday morning?"

"Yes, at four o'clock."

"Nothing like early morning starts. By the by, could you give me a passage round to Mevagissey?"

"With pleasure."

"Thanks awfully. I want to see the beginning of the Regatta. They're running a steamer, but I'm afraid it won't get there till the afternoon. Well, good-bye and a pleasant voyage."

It was with considerable difficulty that the dinghy was pushed off, for the tide had gone down several feet.

When at length the main channel came into view the Sea Scouts gave vent to exclamations of wonderment and dismay.

The "Petrel" was no longer at anchor in the place where she had been left, but was almost high and dry and listing at an acute angle on the opposite shore.

CHAPTER XI

A LUCKY ACCIDENT

PULLING their hardest the Sea Scouts made for the ketch to find that a boat containing three coastguardsmen was lying on the side farthest from them.

"Has she been run into?" asked the Scoutmaster anxiously.

"Not so bad as that, sir," replied a petty officer. "She started to drift when the ebb began to run strongly, and before we could get to her she touched hard and fast on this ledge."

"Is she damaged?"

"Sure, no, sir; it's fairly soft where she's lying, and she's heavily built. She'll be all right, but she won't fleet till close on ten to-night. It's high water at a quarter past one to-morrow morning."

"What's the meaning of 'fleet,' Jack?" asked Hornsby.

"To float," replied the Leader.

"How came she to drag, do you think?" continued Mr Carter.

"She must have fouled her anchor somehow. I reckon that young gent let the cable take charge instead of paying it out easy-like."

"Will it hurt to get on board?"

"No, sir, I think not; but you'll find it pretty uncomfortable with that list. We'll be off back now, sir, we can't do anything more. When she's afloat I'd drop her out into the stream and lay out an anchor and kedge this time."

"There's no returning to Falmouth to-night, lads," announced the Scoutmaster after the coastguardsmen had taken their departure. "We'll have to get under way early on Sunday morning. What's up now, M'Kane?"

M'Kane, who was the first to board the stranded yacht, had made his way across the steeply inclined cockpit to the cabin door, and had thrown back the hatch.

"What a mess down below, sir!" he exclaimed.

It was. The floor was littered with blankets, cushions, books, crockery ware, jars of jam, condensed milk and paraffin; for, in listing, the bunks, racks and cupboards had disgorged their contents into a common receptacle which happened to be the floor.

Nor was the scene of chaos confined to the cabin. In the fo'c'sle the state of things was almost as bad. The major part of Summers' bedding was lying in the chainlocker, in company with the port and starboard lamps that had been dislodged from a rack on the skirting. The cooking utensils had been thrown all over the floor, while soap, paraffin, brick dust and candles intermingled with the week-end supply of bread that the Scouts had thoughtfully laid in before leaving Falmouth, and had unthoughtfully omitted to secure the large earthenware "crock" in which the loaves had been placed.

"It will be a lesson to us to stow things properly," observed Mr Carter, "although this is the last thing one would expect. Get the bedding on deck, you fellows. The sun will dry it and take away a lot of the smell of paraffin. Mind you don't slip, M'Kane. We'll have to wait till the tide rises before we wash up down below."

"Hasn't the tide gone down the last quarter of an hour," remarked Reid. "When we came off, the

coastguards' boat was lying afloat alongside. Now it's all slimy mud."

"There! That's what caused the mischief," exclaimed Leader Osborne, pointing to an object half buried in the slime. It was the "Petrel's" anchor, with the chain caught in a half hitch round one of the flukes. "No wonder the yacht dragged. Shall we haul the anchor aboard, sir?"

"No; that, too, must wait, or everything on deck and in the fo'c'sle will be smothered in mud. When the tide has risen sufficiently we will get the chain in slowly and mop down each link. There's nothing more to be done, now. It's lucky there was nothing on deck insecured, or it would have fallen overboard."

Even the high-spirited lads found the time pass most tediously, for when the flood tide set in the water seemed to crawl ever so slowly over the mud-bank.

At sunset there was just enough water round the yacht to lift her slightly.

"Now, get the chain in board," ordered Mr Carter. "Give it plenty of washing down. Summers and Webb, you get down below in the fo'c'sle and start clearing up; Penarth and Hornsby can tackle the cabin. Reid, you might give me a hand and pass these cushions down. They are dry now, and the dew will be falling in a few moments."

Exactly at ten o'clock the "Petrel" left her muddy berth, and was towed into mid-stream. This time the anchor was lowered slowly till the flukes could be felt scraping over the ground.

"Give her ten fathoms of chain," said Mr Carter. "That's right; now we'll lay out the kedge."

"From the dinghy, sir?"

"No; bend a warp round the cable and pass it aft, outside of everything. I'll bend it to the kedge and throw it out aft. There will be plenty of scope."

So saying, Mr Carter took the kedge-anchor, weighing thirty-four pounds, and, standing on the after deck with his feet wide apart, prepared to throw the mass of metal into the water.

Three times he swung it before letting go. Then to the lads' dismay they saw their Scoutmaster stagger, lose his balance and fall forward. Frantically grabbing at the mizzen boom, Mr Carter just saved himself, for he was dangling over the stern with one end of the stock of the anchor caught in his trouser pocket.

In a trice Osborne and Reid sprang aft and dragged their Scoutmaster into safety, and disengaged the stock of the kedge.

Mr Carter was very white in the face and shaking like a leaf. The blow, both physical and moral, had temporarily unnerved him.

"Thank you, lads," he said at length. "That was a near squeak. Had I gone overboard I should have sunk like a stone with that weight. I had forgotten that the stock had a bend at one end, and it caught in my pocket. That will be another lesson to me never to do things in a slip-shod manner, just to save a little trouble."

"We'll lay the kedge out, sir," said Osborne, leaping into the dinghy. "Carefully there, Reid. Now, you row and I'll drop this thing over the stern. It's a strange fact, but I cautioned Penarth about that self-same thing when we were capsized in the dinghy."

With a splash the kedge disappeared from view. The "Petrel" was safely moored for the night.

It was nearly twelve o'clock before the task of making all tidy down below was completed. Fortunately a large tin of biscuits escaped contamination from the paraffin, and the Sea Scouts were able to ward off the pangs of hunger.

After supper the Tenderfoot went on deck to prepare his bed for the night.

"Would you mind coming out, sir?" he said. "There's a fire or something on shore."

"Hand me my glasses," called out the Scoutmaster, after he had joined Webb in the cockpit. "It is a fire; a rick perhaps. No: it is a cottage. Turn out, you lads; we may be able to do a good turn this night."

Up tumbled the "Seals," Osborne with a coil of rope, Penarth with an axe, and Hornsby and Reid with canvas buckets that formed part of the equipment of the yacht.

In double quick time the dinghy was manned and rowed ashore, where the high banks screened the burning building from view although the glare was visible above the tree-tops.

Racing up the steep slope and plunging through the brushwood, the "Seals" lost no time in arriving upon the scene, although half a mile from the shore of the creek.

A stone, two-storeyed thatched cottage was well alight. One end of the roof was blazing furiously, while the tenants—an old man and his wife—were standing by, too dazed to do anything to prevent the destruction of their home.

"Where is the well?" asked Mr Carter.

Dumbly the old man indicated a corner of the little garden.

"I'm afraid we can't save the house, lads," said the Scoutmaster. "Four of you form a chain and pass buckets of water along. We may keep the flame back a little while. The rest of you follow me. We must get as much of the furniture out as we can."

Into the house rushed the Scoutmaster followed by Osborne and Penarth. Up the rickety stairs they made their way, keeping their mouths tightly closed, for the smoke was drifting in eddying, pungent clouds.

The windows were latticed, and too small to be of

much use in passing the things down below. Mr Carter pointed significantly to the axe Penarth held in his hand.

A few telling blows enabled the Second to knock the three divisions of the window into one. The rush of air that followed cleared the smoke considerably, but it also increased the draught. Mr Carter looked anxiously at the rafters. They were alight, but as yet by no means badly burned.

One by one the various articles of furniture were passed out of the opening Penarth had made, and handed down with as much care as possible to the Sea Scouts without. Even the bed was quickly taken apart and saved. In ten minutes the upper room was bare.

"Now, lads, the downstairs rooms," gasped the Scoutmaster.

Osborne, the last one down, was barely in time, for with a crash the charred rafters and burning thatch fell upon the floor.

"Carry on," ordered Mr Carter. "We'll save this lot too."

Fortunately the walls, built in Cornish fashion, of thick blocks of stone, showed no signs of collapsing with the heat, and with little trouble the whole of the old people's belongings were dragged to a place of safety.

"Knock off with that water, lads," said Mr Carter to those of the Sea Scouts who had been told off for that service. Unremittingly they had toiled, materially delaying the progress of the flames. "We can do no more good. The cottage is bound to go. Here, where are you off to, M'Kane?"

The Scoutmaster sprang forward to stop the lad, but he was too late. M'Kane had disappeared into a wooden shed adjoining the house, the lean-to roof of which had just caught fire.

THE "SEALS" LOST NO TIME IN ARRIVING ON THE SCENE

As Mr Carter made his way into the shed, he cannoned into M'Kane who was backing out with a basket under his arm.

"Hurrah, I've got them, sir," shouted the latter, and in the glare of the flames the Scoutmaster saw five little spaniel puppies lying motionless in the basket.

"Come out as sharp as you can," exclaimed Mr Carter hurriedly, at the same time stretching out his arms to assist M'Kane with his burden.

Even as he did so a heavy object crashed through the smouldering roof, knocking a shower of sparks in all directions. The Scoutmaster was obliged to shut his eyes tightly as the embers flew all around him. He felt the basket tilt. M'Kane was no longer holding on to it.

"Catch hold of this," shouted Mr Carter, calling to some of the other Sea Scouts who were close behind him; then, as Osborne took the basket from him, the Scoutmaster bent and groped with his hands. He could not open his eyes: the pain was intense.

His fingers closed on M'Kane's shoulder. The lad was lying face downward and motionless, and his clothes were smouldering in several places, while he had been struck and rendered unconscious by the fall of a piece of stone from the chimney.

Seizing M'Kane with both hands the Scoutmaster backed into the open, where several of the lad's companions relieved Mr Carter of his burden.

"Is he dead, sir?" asked the Tenderfoot anxiously.

With an effort the Scoutmaster opened his eyes. The water streaming from them washed out most of the particles of dust and grit, but for several seconds he could see nothing.

"No, he's only stunned," announced Osborne, kneeling beside the injured lad.

"No, I'm not," replied M'Kane, overhearing these

words and opening his eyes at that very moment. "I'm all right: are the pups hurt?"

"Yes, you're all right," said Mr Carter reassuringly. "Now, don't attempt to move; lie still a little longer. You've had a crack across the head."

"And the pups are beginning to move," added Webb.

Just then the coastguards arrived upon the scene, quickly followed by some of the villagers of Helford.

"We're just too late to do any good," remarked the Chief Officer. "You lads have got to windward of us this time. Hulloa: some one injured?"

"Yes," replied the Scoutmaster. "A slight concussion. He'll be better in a few minutes. How about those old people? It won't do for them to stay here all night."

"They won't, sir," spoke up one of the villagers. "We'll take 'em back wi' we, won't us, Garge? Come along, Gran'fer, I'll gi' yer missus a 'and. Yer things will be safe now."

Up to the present the old man had hardly spoken a word. The magnitude of the disaster—for he had lived practically all his life in that cottage—had dulled his senses.

"Where be my little dogs?" he asked pathetically.

"They are safe," replied Penarth. "Here they are."

With a trembling hand the old cottager fumbled in the basket, and presently held up a lively young puppy—for the effects of their partial asphyxia had now worn off, and the animals were yelping and barking lustily.

"Sure, I don't know 'ow to thank 'ee," said the old man in a quavery voice. "Take this young pup: 'e be the best o' the bunch. 'Tes the only thing I can think of."

The Sea Scouts looked eagerly at their Scoutmaster, Mr Carter hesitated for a second.

"Thank you," he said. "We'll take the dog with pleasure. We hope you will soon be comfortable in another house, and that neither you nor your good lady will be any the worse for this unfortunate fire."

Then turning to the patrol he continued:

"Fall in, lads: it was a lucky accident that kept us in Helford River this night. We've another good turn to our credit. Webb, you carry the latest member of the 'Petrel's' crew."

CHAPTER XII

CINDERS

THE Sea Scouts retraced their way to the dinghy, M'Kane, who had relapsed into unconsciousness, being carried on a hurdle.

The Scoutmaster had decided to take the lad on board, since the concussion was but slight. If needs be a doctor could be procured at Falmouth, while there would be considerable difficulty in finding out a medical man in the sparsely populated district on the banks of Helford River.

The mere fact that M'Kane had temporarily rallied and had replied to Osborne's words, was in itself sufficient proof that the case was a slight one. In severe cases only is the patient profoundly insensible. Rest in the darkened cabin, with warmth applied to the surface of the body and limbs, was the chief essential towards complete recovery.

"You'll never get that lad aboard in that dinghy of yours," said the coastguard officer. "We'll put him off in our gig. Stand by, men, and pass him aft: gently now."

"Thanks awfully," said Mr Carter gratefully. "I'll go with him, if you don't mind. Osborne, take charge of the dinghy, and get on board as fast as you can. Clear away the upper cot on the starboard side. We must give M'Kane plenty of room and air."

"There's another yacht anchored just ahead of us, Jack," observed Reid, as the dinghy drew alongside the "Petrel."

"I believe it's that quay-punt that came out of

Falmouth with us this morning—or rather yesterday morning."

"'Petrel,' ahoy," sung out a boyish voice from the neighbouring craft.

"Ahoy, there," replied Osborne.

"We heard you were aground. Mr Kenwyn told us, so grandfather said he'd put back and see if we could bear a hand. We've only just come in and found no one on board."

"We've been to a fire: at a cottage up yonder," replied Osborne. "One of our fellows is hurt."

"Much?"

"No, so our Scoutmaster says. We're going back to Falmouth at daybreak."

"How? There's no wind."

"We'll have to sweep her along, then," said the Leader.

"That's where we come in," replied the Falmouth Scout. "We've got a motor on board, and we'll tow you back to the harbour."

"Ay, that we will," added his grandfather.

Just then the coastguards' gig came alongside, and after M'Kane was safely transhipped to the "Petrel," Osborne told Mr Carter of the kind offer on the part of the crew of the quay-punt.

"Thanks awfully," called out the Scoutmaster. "When will you be ready to start?"

"Soon as you be, sir," replied the old fisherman. "'Tes all the same to we, be it day or night. When you'm ready, pass a line. Leave a hand at t'hellum, and the rest o' ye can turn in if ye've a mind to."

"Break the kedge out, Penarth," ordered Mr Carter. "Be careful: we want no more accidents. Now, up with the anchor there, for'ard. Stand by to heave a line."

The quay-punt, skilfully handled, motored close

enough to the "Petrel" to allow a tow-rope to be passed from one craft to the other. Then with a jerk, as the line grew taut, the "Petrel" sedately followed her small but powerful friend.

"You lads can turn in, I think," said Mr Carter. "I'll take the helm. One of you keep a watch and see how M'Kane is progressing; the rest must get all the sleep they can. It's nearly three o'clock."

"But how about your eyes, sir?" asked Summers.

"They are now all right, I hope," was the reply. "At any rate I can see the craft ahead of us. Now, no more noise than is absolutely necessary below there."

A more disreputable crew of Sea Scouts could not be found to compare with the appearance of the "Seals" when they stood revealed in the light of the cabin. Their faces were black with grime and soot; their clothing wet both with the dew and the water that the young firemen had used with such good effect. And not only were their clothes damp: they were rent, scorched, blackened with charcoal and pieces of burnt straw.

"Look here; we can't possibly turn in like this," said Penarth, "and it will take gallons of water to shift this dirt."

"Let's wait till we reach Falmouth and have a bathe over the side, just to help things on a bit," suggested Reid. "My word. Our clothes won't be worth anything."

"I'll mention it to Mr Carter," said Osborne. "I don't think he quite knows of the mess we're in. I say, Webb, when you've finished fondling that pup you might give him some condensed milk and water. If he's as dry as we are he'll want it."

"What are we going to call him?" asked the Tenderfoot.

"Call him 'Cinders,'" murmured M'Kane.

"Right-o," assented the Leader. "We will, old chap. Are you feeling better?"

"Yes, only horribly sleepy," replied the patient.

"Then go to sleep," rejoined Osborne. "You'll feel quite fit in the morning."

"What's that?" asked the Scoutmaster. "Did I hear M'Kane's voice?"

"Yes, sir; he seems perfectly conscious now."

"That's good. I thought he would soon pull through. It was a narrow squeak, by Jove! I thought the whole of the chimney had fallen on top of him, judging by the crash, for I couldn't see a thing."

"We want to tell you, sir, that we think it best not to turn in at present," explained Osborne. "Our clothes are practically spoilt and we are smothered with dirt. We thought we would wait till we reach our moorings and then have a swim and a wash afterwards."

"Very good," assented Mr Carter. "I begin to feel much in want of a good hot bath. We'll soon be able to see what we look like by daylight. See, the dawn is beginning to break."

And he pointed in a north-easterly direction where a greyish light in the sky betokened the approach of a fine day.

"Where are we now, sir?"

"Half way across Falmouth Bay, thanks to our friends ahead. But for them we should be still in Helford River, for there's not a breath of wind."

By the time the "Petrel" reached her moorings it was quite light, although the sun had not yet risen. Amid an exchange of well-meaning compliments the tow-rope was cast off and the quay-punt motored off to her accustomed anchorage.

"Yes, we do look a lot of scarecrows," agreed Mr Carter, as the Sea Scouts paraded on deck. "It's lucky we've a change of clothing on board, for what we are

wearing is only fit to be thrown overboard. I'll write on Monday and order a fresh stock of shirts and shorts to be sent to Plymouth. We can't rely on one set of garments for the week. You've plenty of hot water on, Penarth?"

"Yes, sir, a kettle and two large saucepans full."

"Then overboard, lads, and a good scrub down when you come aboard."

When the lads stripped not only were their faces and hands black, but their bodies as well. Fragments of charred straw from the burning thatch had found their way down inside the Scouts' shirts, till every one of them had a girdle of burnt straw round his waist. Their clothing smelt so strongly of the fire that Mr Carter had no hesitation in condemning the lot; his own flannel suit included.

"I'm going overboard, too, sir," called out M'Kane.

"You're not," said the Scoutmaster firmly. "You stay where you are; we'll give you a wash down."

"But I'm all right, sir," protested the Sea Scout, who was lying on his bunk with Cinders licking his face in a most affectionate manner, as if he knew who had saved his life.

"Yes, you may think you're all right: perhaps you are. In fact I hope such is the case. But you don't want to spoil the rest of your holiday, and that of your companions as well, by running the risk of a relapse, now do you? So rest on your bunk for the remainder of to-day, and then I feel pretty confident that you will be yourself again."

"I understand, sir," said M'Kane. "I'll stick to it; but it's awfully tedious."

The rest of the day—being Sunday—was spent as quietly as possible. Beyond what was absolutely essential no work was done. Before eight that evening the crew of the "Petrel" turned in, for early on the

morrow the first stage of the homeward journey was to commence.

By four o'clock on Monday morning the water-tanks were refilled. Provisions were somewhat scarce, owing to the accident in Helford River, while the early hour prevented any food-stuff being purchased in the town. But with ordinary economy Mr Carter judged that the "Petrel" would arrive at Mevagissey before the grub-locker was bare.

"There's Mr Kenwyn, sir," announced Webb, who was doing watch on deck.

Osborne and Summers manned the dinghy, while the rest of the available crew proceeded to hoist sail. Before the Cornish Scoutmaster stepped on board, the "Petrel" was ready to bid adieu to the hospitable waters of Falmouth Harbour.

"Nice off-shore breeze this morning, lads," was Mr Kenwyn's cheery greeting. "Hulloa, you've a dog on board? Good boy. Good old Spot."

The pup bent his back and grunted as fiercely as a two-month old dog could.

"Call him 'Cinders,' sir," said Penarth. "He'll be friendly then."

The next instant the little spaniel was jumping up at Mr Kenwyn with the greatest friendliness.

"Where did you get him from? He's a very good specimen."

"A man living close to Helford made us a present of him," said Reid.

"I hear they had a fire near there last Saturday night," continued Mr Kenwyn. "Unfortunately our Troops were not there to render assistance. I hear the Helston Scouts turned up in the nick of time. They are jolly smart fellows, the Helston Scouts; particularly good at fire-drill I believe. There's a healthy rivalry between them and our lads."

Mr Carter modestly said nothing. Neither did the members of the patrol, although they exchanged glances at this remarkable version of the fire.

"Cast off there," ordered Mr Carter.

"I'll stow this bag of mine below, if you don't mind," said Mr Kenwyn. Presently he reappeared.

"Anything the matter with one of your lads?" he asked. "The one lying on the bunk. And there's a strong smell as if something were smouldering in the fo'c'sle."

"I'll see what it is, sir," said Summers, diving into the cabin, while Mr Carter explained that M'Kane had been accidentally struck.

"It's some old rags that were burnt yesterday, sir," reported Summers. "There's nothing smouldering there now."

Just as the "Petrel" was rounding the end of the wharf a motor-boat was observed putting off from the Prince of Wales' Pier.

"That's Carfallick, the local Press representative," said Mr Kenwyn. "I suppose he's off to Mevagissey Regatta too. He must have changed his mind, for on Saturday morning he told me he thought he would be engaged elsewhere."

Nearer and nearer came the motor-boat, keeping in the wake of the "Petrel," while a man standing in the stern sheets by the helmsman frantically waved to the ketch.

"They are hailing us, sir," reported Osborne.

"What on earth for?" asked his Scoutmaster. "Hail them and ask them what they want."

"Can I come aboard, sir?" shouted the individual, whom Mr Kenwyn had pointed out as the Pressman.

"Certainly," replied Mr Carter, completely mystified; "we'll luff up for you." Then in an undertone he added, "Perhaps your friend wants a passage round, also, Kenwyn. The more the merrier."

"Don't bother to luff, I'll manage all right," said Carfallick, and as the motor-boat swept within a couple of feet to windward of the yacht, he leapt nimbly on to the "Petrel's" deck.

"I'd like to have an interview with you, sir," exclaimed the reporter without further ado.

"An interview?"

"Yes, with reference to the gallant behaviour of your Troop of Sea Scouts at the fire last Saturday night."

"You told me nothing of this, Carter," remarked Kenwyn reproachfully. "Even when I mentioned the matter and gave the Helston fellows the credit you said not a word."

"I didn't mean to," replied Mr Carter. "We don't believe in self-advertisement. I don't know, Mr Carfallick, that there is anything to make a fuss about. We happened to be there, and did our duty: that is all."

But the Cornish reporter was not to be baulked. By means of a few judicious questions he obtained a general account of what had occurred, and trusting to his innate sense of imagination, he bade the Seal Patrol good day and skipped back into his motor-boat as adroitly as he had leapt out. The launch's head was turned toward Falmouth, and the two craft parted company.

With favouring breeze the "Petrel" soon slipped past St Anthony's Point, and Falmouth—a haven of delight to the Gosport lads during their brief stay—was shut out from their sight by the precipitous headland of Zoze Point.

"You've a fine craft here, Carter," exclaimed Mr Kenwyn enthusiastically. "She's no sluggard: look how we are gliding past the land. I quite envy you."

"Yes, we have a lot to be thankful for," replied the Scoutmaster of the "Seals." "At times I can hardly imagine it to be true that we are sailing in our own craft

off the Cornish Coast. And I'm not very imaginative, either."

"Not as much as Mr Carfallick, eh? He'll make a song of it, mark my words. And you deserve it."

"H'm," grunted Mr Carter; then to change the subject he asked, "That's the Dodman on our port bow I believe?"

"Yes, that's it. With the wind off shore you'll be able to stand in close and let your lads have a good look at that famous headland."

"Why famous, sir?" asked Tenderfoot Webb, who was always thirsting for information.

"Because of the number of wrecks that have occurred off there, for one thing," replied the Cornish Scoutmaster. "But wait till we're abreast of it, and I'll point out some of its peculiarities."

"Yes, it's a straight run, and no outlying dangers," said Mr Carter, consulting the chart. "But we'll have a dead beat when we round the point."

"Oh, Mevagissey is not much farther, and you've a fair tide," replied Mr Kenwyn. "We'll do it hands down."

Mr Carter did not reply. He remembered a similar expression being used by the owner of the "Bullfinch" on the passage from Gosport to Southampton—and the tedious drift in consequence of a sudden drop of the wind.

Eight o'clock found the "Petrel" within two hundred yards of the Dodman, where the rocks pile themselves up to a height of three hundred and sixty feet, the summit of the cliff being crowned with a granite cross.

"What do you think is the size of those boulders, lads?" asked Mr Kenwyn, pointing to some stones on the sloping face of the cliff that seemed as if on the point of toppling over into the sea.

"About as big as our dinghy, sir," hazarded Reid.

"Quite out of it, my lad: they are larger than a six-roomed house. Would you believe it that a few years ago the crew of a shipwrecked vessel managed to get ashore here, and the skipper, whose leg was broken, was assisted up these cliffs?"

"They don't look very steep, sir," remarked the Tenderfoot.

"They would when you're climbing them," replied Mr Kenwyn. "Last summer my Troop had a camp at Gorran—that's close to this headland—and we often visited the Dodman. Some of my youngsters had the good fortune to rescue a London gentleman, who tried to climb and got stuck half way."

"How did they manage it, sir?"

"They noticed the visitor's plight, and procured ropes. The Leader descended with a rope round his waist and another in his hand, and after attempting to haul the man up, our fellows had to lower him to the base of the cliffs again. You notice that monument on the summit—a cross?"

"Was that put there on account of the rescue by the Scouts, sir?"

The Cornishman smiled.

"No," he replied; "that is in memory of the accident to two British destroyers, the 'Thrasher' and the 'Lynx,' that went ashore here in a fog within a few yards of each other. Now we are rounding the Dodman, you can see a long way beyond Fowey now."

"Where is Mevagissey, sir?"

"Round the next headland. You'll be able to see it when we pass these rocks—the Gwinges."

"Get a bit more mainsheet in, Osborne," ordered Mr Carter. "We're being headed: it's close-hauled work now."

"And the wind's falling light, sir," said Hornsby.

"It is, but perhaps the cliffs are sheltering us.

Anyhow, we'll have our work cut out to get there before ten."

Five minutes later it was a flat calm. The sails flapped idly in the sluggish motion of the swell, as the tide running over uneven ground bore the yacht slowly yet surely towards the desired haven.

A quarter to ten found the "Petrel" half a mile to the east'ard of Chapel Point, with the lighthouse on the end of Mevagissey stone pier just "opening out."

"I believe they've started, sir," said Osborne, as a fleet of brown-sailed boats bore away in a bunch towards the distant Gribben Head. "They've got a fine breeze."

"It's the fishing-boat race," announced Mr Kenwyn. "Fine hefty luggers those craft are, too."

"We'll have the breeze in a few moments: it's coming up from sou'west," said Mr Carter. "Cast off your sheets there, lads; it will be sailing free the rest of the way."

The little fishing port of Mevagissey was gay with bunting and crowded with visitors. The stone wall on the seaward side of the pier, and the grassy downs overlooking the harbour were black with people, while a short distance from the pier were numerous yachts "dressed rainbow fashion" with flags, and surrounded by a host of smaller craft filled with sightseers.

"Look, sir," called out Osborne, who was looking through a telescope, "the committee-boat has hoisted our signal letters."

CHAPTER XIII

HAMPSHIRE VERSUS CORNISH SEA SCOUTS

THE Scoutmaster, snatching up his binoculars that lay close handy, brought them to bear upon the four square signal flags hoisted at the masthead of the craft Osborne had indicated.

"You're right," he said. "Run up the answering pennant, Hornsby. Stand by for the next hoist."

The next flags run up on the committee-boat were "code" and "E," signifying that the message to follow was to be spelt.

"They've a smart yeoman of signals on board there," remarked Mr Carter. "It's a Sea Scout, by Jove."

The message when completed read as follows :

"Will Sea Scouts race? Gig will be provided."

"There's a chance for you, lads," declared Mr Kenwyn. "They have asked you to take part in one of the rowing events."

"Look here, Kenwyn, I believe you've had a hand in this," said Mr Carter.

"Guilty, my lord," replied the Cornishman calmly. "Didn't you mention to me that your lads asked if any events were open? Let them by all means, Carter, and we'll see how Hampshire Sea Scouts can compete with our Cornish lads."

"Reply, 'We shall be pleased to race': signal by hand-flags, Osborne; we're near enough now for them to be read."

"There's the acknowledgment, sir," announced Hornsby.

"That's all for the present then. Now, Osborne,

Penarth, Hornsby and Reid, cut below and strip to your vests. Remember you've a tough crew to pull against. Webb, you'll be coxswain. Do as well as you did at Flathouse Regatta, and if we lose it won't be your fault. Now, Summers, get for'ard and stand by with the anchor."

Round swept the "Petrel," head to wind, at less than fifty yards from the committee-boat. By the time the two Scoutmasters and Summers had lowered sail the "Petrel's" racing crew were ready for the fray.

"Will you come on board the committee-boat, sir?" hailed an official through a megaphone. "We're about to draw for boats."

Lying astern of the committee-boat were five gigs. They were about the same length but varied somewhat in beam and weight. Two had been rowed round by the Charlestown Sea Scouts, another hailed from Pentewan, manned by a smart crew of Sea Scouts in dark blue jerseys and red stocking caps, the fourth and fifth belonged to Mevagissey.

"I hope we are not putting you out," said Mr Carter, addressing the officer of the day. "If there are local crews for all these boats we ought not to deprive them of a chance of rowing."

"It is the wish of the Charlestown Sea Scouts to give up one of their boats," was the reply. "We have also decided to draw lots for the boats so as to give all comers an even chance. Should a crew draw their own boat they must draw again till each crew is rowing a strange boat."

At length the competitors lined out, those of the "Petrel's" crew having drawn one of the Mevagissey gigs which happened to be the lightest of the bunch. Reid was bow, then Hornsby and Penarth, with Osborne stroke.

"Ready all!" cautioned Tenderfoot Webb quietly. He was as cool as the proverbial cucumber.

Bang! went the gun. The Charlestown gig was first over the line, with the No. 1 Troop Mevagissey and the Pentewan lads practically neck and neck, the "Petrels" less than a foot behind, and No. 2 Mevagissey last.

Gamely the Gosport Sea Scouts stuck to their task, rowing with admirable precision and steady strokes. In the first leg of the triangular course they had lapped the Pentewan crew, and upon rounding the first mark, thanks to the Tenderfoot's steering, gained on the 1st Mevagissey.

At the second mark-boat the "Petrel's" crew were almost level with the Charlestown Sea Scouts, who had kept premier position all through. But the crucial test came when the third leg of the triangular course had to be faced: the longest reach and dead in the eye of the wind.

The better training and staying powers of the Cornish lads began to tell, and although Webb called on his crew for a final spurt they were unable to respond. Charlestown increased its lead, Pentewan once more taking second place, with the "Petrels" and No. 1 Mevagissey Troop neck and neck, and the 2nd Mevagissey a bare five yards astern of the Gosport lads.

In this order they crossed the line, amid the acclamations of the crowds of spectators.

Then an unexpected thing happened. At the call of a veteran Scoutmaster the Cornish Sea Scouts gave three ringing cheers for the Hampshire Sea Scouts who had done so well against considerable odds, for in the West Country the most popular man after the winner is the gamest loser.

Other events followed in quick succession, mostly races for local fishermen and the neighbouring coast-guards, all of which afforded great attraction to the crew of the "Petrel." Even M'Kane, who still felt the effects

of his injury, sat up on his bunk and looked through the scuttle, while Cinders joined in the acclamation by barking as loudly as his baby lungs would permit.

Amongst other items was an aquatic wrestling match, the scene of the encounter taking place on a small raft. The competitors, for the most part big-framed fishermen, wrestled in the well-known Cornish style in which brute strength is more prominent than skill. "Falls," more often than not, resulted in both competitors falling into the sea with a resounding splash, and in their zest continuing the struggle in the water, amid the encouragements of the on-lookers.

In the Sea Scouts' swimming races, Osborne and Penarth carried off prizes in the hundred yards, but in the quarter of a mile they were hopelessly outpaced and outstayed by the powerfully-built Charlestown and Mevagissey Scouts, who, probably, were as much at home in the water as they were on land.

Then came the plate diving competition, the competition in one event being restricted to Scouts and Sea Scouts. There were eleven entries, of whom the "Petrel's" crew provided three. Twenty tin plates were thrown into twelve feet of water, the competitors having to dive off a spring-board projecting over the side of a fishing-boat.

Summers was the last one in. The Scout just before him—the Leader of a Pentewan patrol—had been successful in bringing up seventeen plates. He could, he declared, have brought up two more, only they slipped from his grasp as he was coming to the surface.

"If you don't beat that we are out of it, Summers," whispered Osborne.

"I'll have a good try at it anyhow," replied the lad. Summers was a tall fellow without an ounce of superfluous fat Some people might have called him

thin, but there was a depth of chest that betokened a good lung power.

Taking a deep breath, Summers dived with hardly a splash. The water was so clear that his movements were clearly discernible by those on the committee-boat. His arms and legs moved slowly—far more so than those of any previous competitor—yet his progress over the sandy bed of the sea was none the less speedy.

Once, at the end of thirty seconds, he stopped. The spectators imagined he was returning to the surface, but they were mistaken. The lad was off again, groping for the plates that lay farthest off.

A minute passed. Only one plate, lying five yards from the place where the others had fallen, remained. Would the Scout see it?

Suddenly Summers turned and swan straight for the remaining plate, his left hand, grasping those he had already picked up, being held against his side. Out shot his right hand. The plate was captured. Then with a "kick-off" with his left foot he shot up to the surface; one minute and fifteen seconds from the time of taking the header.

Shaking the water from his eyes, Summers swam easily to the committee-boat, where eager hands were outstretched to relieve him of his burden.

The Sea Scout handed up twelve plates only.

"He's out of it," exclaimed Osborne, who was watching from the deck of the "Petrel." "He must have dropped the rest."

Paddling round to the accommodation ladder of the committee-boat, Summers climbed on board; then, to every one's surprise he drew from his bathing costume eight more plates.

"I've dived for plates before, sir," he said in reply to the judge's look of amusement and surprise.

"Twenty plates is a big fistful, so I stopped half way and put those I had already picked up in the neck of my bathing-dress."

"You're a true Scout, I see," remarked the official.

"I hope so, sir; I try to be," replied Summers.

The greasy pole provided no end of fun, for the pole was exceptionally long and springy, and the slight ground-swell added to the difficulty. Very few of the competitors were able to walk more than two yards of that slippery path. Some fell in an undignified manner, frequently on the heads of their unfortunate predecessors; others, finding themselves slipping, dived clear. Thirty-nine attempts failed to win the elusive leg of mutton, till finally it was awarded on points to a tubby coastguardsman, who more by good luck than good judgment succeeded in walking two-thirds of the length of the pole.

"Come on, you lads," shouted the officer of the day, addressing the "Petrel's" crew, "you'll enter for the lassoing competition?"

"What's that, sir?" asked Summers. "Of course, we know what lassoing is, but what sort of competition is this?"

"I can't tell you," replied Mr Carter. "It's quite new to me."

"I can," added Mr Kenwyn. "If you can throw a rope you ought to stand a good chance."

Once more the gigs were pressed into service, but this time each had a small platform fixed across the bows. Two lads were to row in each, no coxswain being allowed, but instead a Sea Scout stood on the platform with a coil of rope terminating in a running noose. Each pair of boats decided a heat separately, the thrower who succeeded in capturing his opponent by lassoing him being declared the victor, till only one competitor was left in.

It was fine sport. Frequently an over-energetic thrower would lose his balance and fall in, but in many cases an opponent would be neatly caught and jerked overboard, and ignominiously towed to the committee-boat.

In the last heat Penarth adroitly lassoed his man—the Leader of a Pentewan patrol—round the shoulders, while simultaneously the Cornish lad's noose fell over Penarth's waist, pinioning his arms to his side.

"Pull, pull!" yelled a score of enthusiastic voices, and then the fun commenced.

Both crews rowed their hardest, straining at their oars while each competitor strove to jerk his opponent overboard. Finding this almost an impossibility, Penarth slackened off his rope and relied solely upon the lasso round his waist, leaning backwards till his head was immediately over the Scout at the bow oar.

The Cornish Scout also leant backwards, bracing his feet upon the edge of the platform. The result was a deadlock, and seemed to depend solely upon the staying powers of the lads who were rowing.

"Go it, 'Petrels'!" "Stick to it, 'Otters,'" shouted their respective supporters. Penarth was red in the face, for the noose was cutting pretty badly, but by moving his arms in front of him the strain upon them was considerably reduced. Pain or no pain he was going to grin and bear it, while the Cornish lad was equally determined.

Suddenly the rope parted. Head over heels went the Pentewan Scout, fortunately missing the gunwale of his boat, and disappeared with a terrific splash.

As for Penarth, he, too, shot backwards, knocking Summers off the thwart, and subsiding heavily upon Osborne. All three were struggling in a heap on the bottom-boards, while the gig, released from the strain of the rope, shot sternforemost like a dart.

Lying directly in her course was a large rowing boat in which half a dozen Christie minstrels were livening things up, according to their ideas, by a vigorous chorus.

"Heave-o, my hearties,
When the squall begins to blow.
Oh, when at sea you're safe and free,
When——"

Crash! Fairly amidships the gig rammed the minstrel troupe's craft. The boat swayed, and the singers, losing their balance, completed the catastrophe. The spectators had a momentary glimpse of swallow-tails, banjos, feet and music ere the musicians shot into the waters of Mevagissey Bay.

Five minutes later, six miserable-looking objects, feeling anything but "safe and free," were landed on the steps of the pier, amid the good-natured banter of the onlookers.

With the "duck-hunt" the aquatic part of the Regatta came to a close, although there were to be fireworks ashore in the evening. The visiting yachts and boats began to clear out, amongst them being the Falmouth steamer in which Mr Kenwyn returned to his home.

Three ringing cheers from the "Petrel's" crew were given as a token of farewell to the departing Scoutmaster. The lads realised that although they had not lost a new-found friend, it was quite possible that they would see him no more.

"What do you propose to do, Mr Carter?" asked the officer of the day. "Are you coming into the harbour or going on to Fowey?"

"We thought of anchoring off here to-night," replied the Scoutmaster. "The lads are very anxious to have a look round ashore, and the Mevagissey Scouts have promised to show them the place."

"In that case I would bring your yacht into the inner harbour," replied the official. "I don't want to unduly alarm you, but the weather does not look promising. What do you say, harbour-master?"

"We're in for a blow before morning," replied that worthy. "The glass is dropping a lot: I don't know whether you noticed it."

"To tell the truth I haven't looked at the barometer since this morning," replied Mr Carter.

"Well, it's either one of two things: either run for Fowey before it gets dark, or come inside the harbour. You may be weather-bound for some days, but I don't mind saying that in my opinion our little harbour is quite as interesting as Fowey."

"We'll stop at Mevagissey, then."

"Good man. We'll do our best to make you comfortable. If you'll tell your lads to heave up the anchor, I'll get a motor-launch to tow you in. There's a berth alongside the inner wall, eh?"

"We'll find room for her, sir," replied the harbour-master. "There won't be enough water till nine o'clock, but she'll lie quietly in the outer harbour till then."

In a very short while the "Petrel" was berthed alongside the outer pier, close to a convenient flight of steps, fenders being put out to prevent her sides being damaged by the masonry.

"I want two lads to remain on board," said Mr Carter, after a belated tea was demolished. "The rest can go ashore till a quarter to nine, when we shift our berth. I see there are plenty of guides to take you in tow," and he indicated a strong detachment of local Scouts lining the edge of the pier.

"I'll stay, sir," volunteered Hornsby.

"And I, too," added Reid. "We may be able to stretch our legs later on."

"How about Cinders, sir?" asked the Tenderfoot,

who had taken upon himself the patronage of the "Petrel's" mascot. "May I bring him? If he's tired I'll carry him."

Mr Carter assented, and soon the majority of the yacht's crew were being marched off with a Cornish Scout on either side and two or three more also in attendance.

"My word, what a crowd of boats!" exclaimed Osborne, in astonishment.

He might well express surprise, for in the inner harbour, high and dry, were about eighty boats, all of a similar design. They were arranged in rows, each row being as straight as a line of soldiers, while to prevent them from "listing" when the tide fell each boat was supported by a pair of legs.

"Aren't they used now?" asked Osborne.

"Yes, of course they are," replied the Cornish lad.

"But why aren't they out fishing?"

"Yesterday was Sunday," replied the Mevagissey Scout.

"Yes, I know," replied the Leader, who already was aware of the strict observance of the Sabbath by Cornish fishermen. "But to-day isn't."

"But it's our regatta-day," declared the lad proudly. "We're having fireworks, and our Troops are acting as torch-bearers. Fireworks won't be till half-past nine, and by that time your ship will be safe inside the inner harbour."

"I shouldn't think there would be room for her," observed Osborne, still regarding the maze of fishing-boats with unabated interest.

"There's room for plenty more. Old Dan Trevalla is out to-day, and Dick Pesco, and perhaps half a dozen more. They'll be in before dark, I'll allow, for it's going to blow fairish to-night."

"What's that thing for?" questioned Webb, pointing to a post about twelve feet in height and provided with projecting "chocks" on two opposite sides to facilitate climbing.

"Why, don't you know?" asked his new friend, in surprise. "That's for the rocket apparatus."

"No, I didn't," replied the Tenderfoot. "We have none down our way."

"No rocket life-savers?" asked the Mevagissey Scout, equally surprised. "Then what do you do when a vessel comes ashore?"

"Send out the life-boat, although it isn't often that it is required."

"My word, what a dull place you must live in," exclaimed the Cornish lad. "We've rocket gear all along the coast. We Scouts know how to work it too. Sometimes the coastguards let us practise. If you're here on Wednesday you can see us at work, for there's to be a life-saving display in the afternoon."

Punctually at a quarter to nine the Sea Scouts returned on board. There was now sufficient water to enter the inner harbour, but as yet the harbour-master had not put in an appearance to direct operations.

Outside the wind was rising rapidly, and showers of spray were flying over the parapet on the seaward side of the pier. In the outer harbour the effect of the fairly strong seas was apparent not only by the spray but by the long heavy swell.

"Look, lads," exclaimed the Scoutmaster. "There's a lugger coming in. Watch how she behaves."

Sweeping close to the pierhead, so close that from where the Scouts watched it seemed as if there were less than a foot to spare, the fishing-boat tore at a furious speed. Her double-reefed dipping lug and

standing mizzen sail were wet with spray almost to the peak; her oilskin-clad fishermen were standing on the alert, the helmsman holding the mizzen halliard in his left hand, the other member of the crew being ready with the main-sail halliards.

Carried onwards by her momentum the lugger shot into calm water, her sails, a few seconds before stretched almost to bursting point, now hanging idly from the yards in the sheltered harbour.

A grunted order, and down came the canvas, and the boat, safe after a tempestuous tossing outside, glided quietly into her place in the tier in the inner harbour.

"That's the last one in to-night, I'll allow," shouted the harbour-master from the top of the pier. "I'll cast you off now, sir. Sweep her in. There's a couple of hands on the East Pier head to take your warps and check your way."

Thanks to plenty of willing assistance the "Petrel" was snugly berthed alongside a wall, masthead tackles being taken ashore to prevent her listing outwards when the tide fell. Blow high, blow low, the yacht was in perfect security.

The strong wind played havoc with the firework arrangements, but the good folk of Mevagissey were not to be done out of their amusement by the unfavourable elements. It mattered little whether the Roman candles threw sparks amongst the crowd or whether the rockets flew off in a tangent instead of soaring skywards. They were fireworks all the same.

"Time to turn in, lads," ordered Mr Carter shortly after eleven, and when the last of the roysterers had gone home.

Dead tired after their exertions the Scouts were only too glad to obey orders, and within ten minutes of

"lights-out" silence reigned on board the good yacht "Petrel."

It seemed less than a quarter of an hour, although it was actually half-past two in the morning, when the Scoutmaster threw open the sliding hatch of the companion-way and shouted:

"Turn out, lads; there's a ship in distress."

CHAPTER XIV

SEA SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE

It did not take the "Petrel's" crew long to turn out, in spite of the fact that they had led a most strenuous life and had kept late hours from the first time they set foot on the yacht's deck.

Hastily donning their clothing and putting on either oilskins or pilot coats, the Sea Scouts tumbled up, the last one to do so gaining the cockpit just as a rocket soared upwards from the coastguard station, to indicate that the signals of distress had been observed.

The Gosport Sea Scouts had seen the Mevagissey men at play: now they were to see them at work, and hazardous work at that—saving life from the angry sea.

It was now blowing hard from the south-east and dead into the deep bight between the two dangerous headlands, the Dodman and the Gribben. A small topsail schooner had got "embayed" or caught between these two projecting points, and was unable to get an offing.

Nor could she run for shelter in any of the tidal harbours of Pentewan, Charlestown or Par; she had two courses open to her—to trust to her anchors or drive ashore. All her canvas had been blown away. Her anchors were not holding, and there was every indication of her running aground on the rock-bound coast.

"There she is, sir," exclaimed a great-coated coastguard, pointing to a flickering light, just discernible through the murky darkness. "She's showing a flare. Reckon if the life-boats don't get her crew off in time there'll be work for the Pentewan chaps with their rocket apparatus."

Down by the life-boat slipway the crowd was densest. The local Scouts were acting as torch-bearers to throw a light upon the scene, while the Mevagissey Sea Scouts were, with others, assisting the life-boat's crew in launching the boat on its errand of mercy.

Launching the Mevagissey life-boat is a fairly easy task compared with others in the district. The craft is launched in the quiet waters of the harbour: it is between the outer pierheads that the tussle with the elements begins.

"Buck up, you lads," urged the sturdy coxswain, "or the Polkerris life-boat'll be there afore us."

"All clear!" shouted a voice: that of the harbour-master who was superintending the launching operation. "Let go."

Down the slip glided the life-boat, her red, white and blue painted hull looking ghostly in the flickering torch-light. Then, giving way with a will, the oil-skinned, life-belted crew urged the boat forward to the open sea.

Instantly there was a stampede of the spectators to the pierhead—fishermen, summer visitors, Scouts; men, women and children—all regardless of the heavy spray that dashed in clouds over the sheltering wall. Their chief desire was to give a hearty cheer of encouragement to the gallant men who were facing death to save their fellow-creatures.

"Give 'em another!" bawled a grey-haired fisherman. "'Twill do 'em good. I know it will. I can call to mind the times when I wur one of 'em—an' a good hearty cheer'll help 'em along wunnerful-like."

Swept completely from end to end the life-boat struggled seaward, slowly yet surely increasing her distance from the haven. There was a healthy rivalry between the Mevagissey and the Polkerris life-boat crews, and the knowledge that the latter had scored heavily on

the last occasion of a call for aid added to the former's dogged determination.

"She's parted!" exclaimed a stentorian voice. "Lord help them. Her's drifting straight on to Black Head."

Such was indeed the case. The schooner's ground tackle had failed to hold her, and at the mercy of the wind and sea she was being borne rapidly towards a particularly dangerous part of that iron-bound coast.

Instantly there was a general movement on the part of most of the spectators. To watch the rocket apparatus at work they thought nothing of making their way, as fast as they could go, for a distance of from two to three miles along the cliffs.

"What are we going to do, sir?" asked M'Kane, who, forgetting his injuries, had turned out with the rest.

"Wait one moment," replied Mr Carter. "I'll see what the local Sea Scouts are doing."

Under the lee of the rocks were the three Troops of Mevagissey Sea Scouts, "standing easy" while their officers were conferring. Up to the latter Mr Carter made his way.

"We're on duty, here," replied one of the Scoutmasters, Mr Tretheway, who had made the Gosport Scoutmaster's acquaintance the previous day. "You see our fellows are in charge of the rocket apparatus lately presented to the Association by a Cornish gentleman in London. We have been given a certain duty by the chief officer of Coastguards—patrolling a section of the coast between here and Chapel Point. To-night is exceptional; for you know the authorities discourage night work. We are expecting two patrols back every minute."

"Have you any objection to my lads doing duty with you?" asked Mr Carter. "It would be very instructive."

"And very disagreeable," added Mr Tretheway, "unless they are well protected from the weather. It

blows hard on the cliff path. But of course your lads can help us, or they can bear a hand with the Second Troop who are detailed to procure hot refreshments for the life-boat's crew. They will come back empty-handed, I——"

The Cornish Scoutmaster's words were interrupted by a Scout rushing up and exclaiming:

"There's another wreck, sir. Just this side of Chapel Point. The 'Otters' have just flashed a message for help."

With a hurried "Excuse me; bring your lads along if you like," Mr Tretheway turned and rejoined his Troop.

"To the rocket station, lads!" he ordered. "There's a wreck on Chapel Point."

A similar order was given to the Second Troop, while the Third, knowing they were required to await the return of the life-boat, accepted the situation with commendable resignation. Although they envied their comrades' duty they did not hesitate to wish them good luck.

"Come along, lads," cried Mr Carter. "There's another ship ashore; we are going to bear a hand with the local Scouts. If any of you wish to remain here and await the life-boat's return, you can do so."

"It's like asking us whether we would prefer chocolates to physic," whispered Reid to M'Kane, as the "Petrel's" crew hurried in the wake of the Mevagissey Scouts. "Are you fit?"

"Right as ninepence," replied M'Kane; then under his breath he muttered, "I wouldn't say so if I weren't."

The door of the rocket-shed was already unlocked, and the Mevagissey lads were busily engaged in getting out the box of rockets, blocks and tackle, hawsers and lifelines. Each Scout knew his particular job, and as fast as they were able to obtain the gear assigned to their care they raced off up the steep hillside towards Chapel Point.

All the same they were glad of the "Petrel's" crew's assistance, for the fierce wind on the exposed cliff-path was terrific. Every Scout realised that each moment was precious. Lives were in jeopardy, and a few seconds' delay might mean complete disaster.

All the gear had to be carried by hand, since the nature of the ground would not permit even a hand-cart to be made use of.

"What a mercy our craft is safely in harbour," thought Mr Carter as he glanced at the wild expanse of angry sea, for the white crests of the breakers were distinctly visible through the darkness.

On and on staggered the Scouts, for they were almost "blown" by their upward struggle against the wind, while their feet were continually slipping on the soft ground.

In the rear came eight Scouts bending under the weight of a huge coil of rope, on which the breeches-buoy was to travel on its journey to and from the wreck.

"There she is, sir," shouted one of the Cornish Scouts, pointing downwards over the cliff. His words were barely audible above the roar of wind and sea.

Piled up on a ledge of rocks less than twenty yards from the cliff was a small fishing-craft of about twenty tons. She was lying well on her starboard side with the sea breaking completely over her. Her mainmast had gone by the board, but her mizzen was still standing.

"Is there anyone on board?" asked Mr Tretheway of the Scouts who had been patrolling the cliff and had seen the craft go ashore.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "three men crouching aft."

"Ah, I can see them. Now, then, lads, signal to them that the rocket line is coming."

Quickly one of the Scouts made the required signal with a flashing lamp. There was no reply. Either the

shipwrecked men were without means of showing a light in response or they were unable to read the signal.

"Now, Polbarth, fire a rocket right over her."

The "Petrel's" crew could not help wondering why a line could not be thrown by hand. It seemed as if they could easily toss a pebble on the deck of the stranded craft. They were unaccustomed to heights. The wreck was farther from the base of the cliff than they imagined. Nothing thrown by human strength alone could hit that mark in the face of the howling gale.

With a flash that dazzled the eyes the rocket sped on its way, the line which it carried falling fairly over the wreck amidships.

"They're heaving, sir," announced one of the Mevagissey Scouts as the line began to travel outwards over the cliff.

"Then pay out handsomely," ordered Mr Tretheway. "See that the tail block is clear."

In about ten minutes both the endless rope and the hawser were passed to the wreck, the shore end of the hawser being made fast to an iron crowbar driven deeply into the earth. To keep this from being displaced a couple of rope guys were bent to the upper end, and the Gosport Sea Scouts were told to hang on like grim death.

"It doesn't seem much," explained the Cornish Scoutmaster hastily, "but a lot depends upon you. If you let the crowbar slip all our work will be undone, so stick to it."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the "Petrel's" crew, glad to think that they were not merely lookers-on.

"Haul away roundly," ordered Mr Tretheway, addressing his lads. "Here it comes."

Slowly the endless line was hauled in by nearly a dozen strong Scouts. Even then they had all their

work cut out, for they were hauling a considerable weight up a steep incline.

Eagerly the Gosport lads watched the operations, though not for one instant did they relax the strain on the guy-ropes.

"Avast heaving," shouted Mr Tretheway, as the breeches-buoy appeared on the edge of the cliff: not empty, but with a human burden.

Two Scouts, with lifelines around their waists, staggered out against the gale to the brink of the cliff and assisted the first of the shipwrecked crew ashore.

He was a young man of about eighteen or nineteen, his features pinched with the cold, and so stiff that had it not been for the Scouts supporting him he would have fallen to the ground.

"How many still on board?" asked the Scoutmaster.

"Two more, sir," replied the man feebly.

"Any lost?"

"Not yet, sir."

"I hope they won't be," ejaculated Mr Tretheway. "Haul back the buoy, lads. Here, two of you take charge of this man and see him safely into the village. If you can find a doctor—although I think they are all gone to the wreck at Pentewan—tell him there's a case or two for him."

After waiting sufficiently long to enable the second member of the crew to enter the breeches-buoy—for there were no signals made from the wreck—the Scouts hauled away at the endless rope again.

The second "hand" was quite insensible; had not his remaining comrade taken the precaution of lashing him in he might easily have slipped from the slings of the buoy.

It was too risky to detail any more of the party to take this man into Mevagissey. Four lads at least

would be required, and these the Scoutmaster could not spare. So the rescued mariner was laid on the ground, and an oilskin thrown over him, until the work of life-saving was completed.

The last man was almost hauled into safety when the sudden slacking off of the hawser told its own tale: the wreck had broken up.

"Avast heaving!" ordered the Scoutmaster. He realised that there was a danger of the man being seriously injured in being hauled over the edge of the cliff, for the brink was known to be in a very crumbling state.

The "Petrel's" crew, since the hawser was now useless, were no longer required to man the guys. All the strain upon the hauling line was borne by the Mevagissey lads.

Snatching up a stout rope, Mr Carter made a "bowline on the bight"—a loop that will not "run" under a strain as a running bowline will. He realised that brawn and muscle were necessary to effect the final rescue of the last survivor.

"Lads, attend to me," he exclaimed hurriedly. "I want you to lower me over the cliff. Keep your ears open, and when you hear me shout 'belay,' take a half turn round the crowbar."

Walking deliberately towards the edge of the cliff, Mr Carter sat down; and, having assured himself that the Scouts were slowly paying out the rope, he sidled cautiously over the brink.

A sudden jerk told him that his fears were well founded. The "rotten" rock had given way under his feet.

With a thud he fell inwards against the wall of stone and within arm's length of the man he had determined to rescue. The seaman was almost insensible; his head and right arm were bent over the side of the buoy,

while with his left hand he feebly grasped the sling that attached the buoy to the hauling line.

Planting his feet firmly against the cliff and keeping his body at an angle of about forty-five degrees with the perpendicular, Mr Carter grasped the breeches-buoy with both hands. He knew that there would be a terrific strain upon the rope that supported him. Should the Scouts be unable to retain their grasp, or should there be a defect in that rope, he would assuredly be dashed to death upon the jagged rocks below.

With a tremendous heave he swung the buoy and its burden clear of the cliff. As he did so the Scouts on the hauling-line "took up the slack." The seaman was six inches nearer to safety.

At this juncture Mr Tretheway equipped one of his Scouts with a lifeline and sent him to the brink of the cliff, where, lying at full length, he could see what was going on and signal to his comrades what was to be done.

In five successive heaves, till the perspiration poured from him, Mr Carter succeeded in raising the buoy till its edge was above that of the cliff. Then with a steady strain the Mevagissey lads hauled the last of the wrecked vessel's men into safety, while their brother Scouts, the "Petrel's" crew, performed a like office for their Scoutmaster.

"Thanks be. What a good night's work!" ejaculated the Cornish Scoutmaster fervently; then ordering the Scouts to pack up their gear—all except the hawser and hauling-line which were still entangled in the wreckage—he led the way back to the village, with the two shipwrecked mariners carried on stretchers formed from greatcoats and staves.

CHAPTER XV

NOT WORTH A SILVER CROSS

THERE was little sleep for the Sea Scouts that night. Directly they returned to the life-boat house they were supplied with hot coffee, while the exhausted seamen were taken to the coastguard's station and put to bed.

This done the Troop that had remained on duty at the life-boat house was sent out on patrol duty, while the lads who had effected the rescue of the crew of the fishing-craft were told to "stand easy" under shelter until the life-boat returned from its gallant but fruitless errand of mercy.

Needless to say Mr Tretheway was greatly elated.

"This night's work proves that we are worthy of the trust laid upon us," he said to his Hampshire colleague. "I suppose you are hardly acquainted with the difficulties under which we laboured when our Sea Scouts first obtained recognition by the Board of Trade. We are, unfortunately, under two masters—the Admiralty and the Board of Trade. I am now speaking with reference to our duties in connection with the coastguards. We used to be allowed one or at the most two special drills with the rocket apparatus per annum, but we were not allowed to fire a rocket even if purchased privately, without special sanction from the Board of Trade."

"Yes, I remember seeing the regulations," remarked Mr Carter, "but as there is no rocket detachment in the coastguards of our district we were not interested."

"Then, one night last winter, two wrecks occurred simultaneously on the coast, as they did to-night. Off

went the coastguards with the then only available rocket apparatus to one wreck; fortunately the other vessel was in a position where assistance could be rendered from the shore without the necessity of a rocket, but that showed our Sea Scouts were not merely hangers-on to the coastguards but real life-savers. In consequence the Board of Trade gave us special permission to make independent use of the apparatus presented to us, and to-night vindicates their action."

"Life-boat coming, sir," announced the Leader of one of the Mevagissey patrols.

In the pale dawn the gallant craft, under close reefed sail, swept into the harbour, her crew fatigued, yet not regretting their fruitless task since no lives had been lost. Willing hands helped to haul the huge boat upon the slipway and up into the shed, while the crew went home to snatch a few hours' rest, never knowing but that they might be called out for duty within the next hour.

Hardly was the life-boat housed when the coastguards and the main crowd of spectators returned from Black Head, with every one of the survivors of the ill-fated top-sail schooner. The whole place was a pandemonium of delight; the sea had been baulked of its prey, thanks, under Providence, to the efforts of the coastguards and the Sea Scouts.

As for the "Petrel's" crew they literally "slept the clock round," and it was close on four in the afternoon when the lads were roused from their slumbers.

The wind had fallen considerably, but there was still too much sea running to attempt to get under way even if the Scoutmaster wished. But Mr Carter had no desire to do so. To take a crew of lads out to sea so soon after a night of exertion would put too much strain upon their powers of endurance.

So the "Petrel" spent two more tides in the inner harbour, her crew "standing easy" and doing nothing

beyond preparing meals and washing up. Towards evening the wind dropped entirely, the sun sank in a deep crimson sky, and everything foretold a fine day on the morrow. The summer's gale, severe while it lasted, had quickly blown itself out.

At half-past nine on the Wednesday morning, as soon as there was sufficient water, the "Petrel" cast off from the quayside, and was warped into the outer harbour. Water tanks and grub lockers had been replenished, and the lads were once more in fine fettle, and eager to resume their voyage.

Amid the ringing cheers of their chums the Mevagissey Scouts, to which the patrol lustily replied, the "Petrel" hoisted her red wings, and with a light but favouring breeze she slipped slowly past the lighthouse on the pierhead.

As soon as the yacht drew clear of the land the breeze freshened, and, coming dead astern, made steering a tricky task. Osborne took the helm, while most of his companions were lying at full length on deck, basking in the sunshine.

"I'll go below for a few minutes, Osborne," said the Scoutmaster. "I wish to verify our position by the chart, although I think we are giving the Canis Rock a wide berth. Keep her as she is, if you can. If you cannot do so without gybing, edge her off a point or two till I come on deck."

The Leader did his best, but the wind was far from true. It blew with eddying puffs, so that more than once Osborne was obliged to down helm to avoid that risky occurrence, an accidental gybe.

Suddenly the main-boom lifted, and before the helmsman could counter by thrusting over the tiller the mainsail was taken aback. Over flew the boom with well-nigh irresistible force, bringing up with a tremendous jerk as the mainsheet took the strain.

Luckily none of the crew was in the way of that charging spar, but Cinders was not so fortunate. The dog had taken up his position on the cabin-top, and just as the accident happened he had been rudely awakened out of a quiet sleep by the unwelcome attentions of a wasp.

With a snap of his jaws, Cinders leapt in the air to seize the insect, and caught by the boom he was thrown fairly into the sea.

Alarmed by the sudden jerk that shook the yacht from truck to keelson, Mr Carter rushed on deck. He was just in time to see M'Kane taking a header into the water to go to the aid of his pet.

"Hard down your helm," ordered the Scoutmaster, calmly. "Haul in your mainsheet—check your headsail sheets."

At the same time he threw a lifebuoy with great precision, near enough to be within easy distance of the swimmer, yet far enough to obviate any risk of M'Kane being stunned by the life-saving appliance.

Round swung the "Petrel," till she was close-hauled on the starboard tack, on which course she would pass within fifty yards of M'Kane, who, with one hand grasping the pup by the scruff of the neck, the other holding on to the lifebuoy, was making no attempt to swim towards the yacht. He had complete confidence in the ability of his comrades to feel sure of being picked up.

Well it was that Mr Carter had had opportunities of gauging the amount of way the "Petrel" carried when she had made several vain attempts to pick up her moorings in Falmouth Harbour.

With a gentle deliberate movement of the tiller he shot the yacht into the wind, and headed straight for the place where the lad was clinging to the lifebuoy.

"Port or starboard?" he asked, when the high bows prevented him from seeing which way to steer.

"Port, sir," replied the Tenderfoot promptly.

The Scoutmaster instantly ported his helm, and the yacht swung round, away from the buoy, passing it on the port bow just beyond reach of the boathook that Osborne held ready.

Webb realised that he had made a mistake. By giving the order "port" it meant that the helm was to be put over to port and thus turn the yacht's head to starboard, which was exactly the opposite to what was required.

Mr Carter said nothing at the moment, neither did the Tenderfoot. With the yacht "in irons" and making stern-way, the situation might have been serious had M'Kane been swimming for his life; but the support afforded by the lifebuoy removed all immediate danger.

Once more the "Petrel" was brought under control, gybed and made to repeat the luffing manœuvre. This time she came to a standstill within three feet of M'Kane, who, having handed Cinders into Osborne's arms, climbed up by means of the bobstay, while Penarth retrieved the lifebuoy with his boathook.

"I'm sorry I made a mess of things, sir," said the Tenderfoot.

"You did; there's no getting away from the fact," replied Mr Carter. "All the same you did the right thing by owning up and not trying to argue that wrong's right, as some fellows would do. Remember in future, the orders 'port and starboard' refer to the side toward which the tiller is to be put, and not to the direction of the bows of the craft. Otherwise you'll never get a pilot's badge. M'Kane, another time don't be so hasty—going overboard to save a dog. It isn't necessary, and gives a lot of trouble. Cinders, although a pup, could keep afloat probably longer than you can, and we could go about and pick him up easily enough. It was, no doubt, a plucky action on your part, but one showing a

lack of self-restraint. It's not worth the Silver Cross, you know."

"But, sir,——," began M'Kane.

"Well?"

"I couldn't help going when I saw poor Cinders knocked overboard."

"Exactly—you couldn't help it: but you should. Think before you act. Had there been much of a sea running you might have got into difficulties. Some of your comrades would have jumped in after you—necessary in that case—and there would possibly, although not probably, be loss of life. I've said enough, so get out of your wet clothes as fast as you can, and hang them on the weather shrouds to dry. It's unyachty but it cannot be helped."

The "Petrel" had now weathered the Canis Rock and was pointing in a north-easterly direction towards the rock-bound coast. Dead ahead could just be discerned a gap in the cliffs, with a grey ruin on the left and lifeboat coastguard station on the right. Through the gap could be seen quite a town, with a conspicuous square church tower.

"There's Fowey, lads," announced the Scoutmaster. "A town with a history. Amongst other incidents it was burnt by the French."

"Burnt by the French, sir?" asked Reid incredulously.

"Yes," asserted Mr Carter, "as many other towns on the south coast of England. You learn history at school, how that the English armies won decisive victories over the French, but our historians often choose to ignore the other side of the question. It's British natural self-conceit all over. In the Middle Ages we neglected to Be Prepared and often suffered heavily in consequence. But I want you to take note of our bearings: it may come in useful to you later on, and in any case you ought to know what I am steering for and not trust

blindly to me to bring you to port. You see the church? Immediately below it is a small white lighthouse like a pigeon-cote. So long as we keep those two objects in line we are in deep water until we are within the headlands. Now, you take the helm, Reid, and keep her on the bearings I have given. We'll down with the mainsail now. The wind and tide are fair, and we don't want to carry too much way when approaching the anchorage."

"What a jolly place!" exclaimed Hornsby. "And, look, what a decent little cove. And what fine sands. There are crowds of boys bathing there."

"Yes, that's Ready Money Cove," said Mr Carter, "so called because coins from a wreck have frequently been found there. Hulloa! There's the coastguard looking at us through his telescope. Make our number, Osborne, and it will remove his suspicions if he has any."

The Leader quickly bent the four signal flags to the halliards and hoisted them to the foremast head. Away doubled the look-out man, referred to the "List of British Shipping," and replied by hoisting the code pennant.

"Now he knows whom we are," observed Mr Carter. "But, steady on, he's going to signal to us."

"Where are you from?" came the message.

"Falmouth," replied Osborne, working his arms with great dexterity.

"Why did he ask that, sir?" asked Reid.

"In case we came from abroad and had neglected to hoist our ensign at the masthead. Now, if he is not satisfied, he will communicate with the custom-house people, and they will put off and search the yacht. Stand by, for'ard."

Penarth and Hornsby were preparing to let go the anchor when a boat, manned by two youngsters of

about thirteen years of age, rowed up to within easy hailing distance of the yacht.

"Please, sir," said one, giving the salute, "you can pick up father's moorings if you like. He's away and won't be back till Saturday."

"Thanks," replied the Scoutmaster, "and what Troop do you belong to?"

"The 2nd Polruan, sir, both of us," and he pointed to a waterside village opposite the town of Fowey.

The Scouts were about to row off when Mr Carter called them back.

"Come on board," he said, "and have a yarn with us."

Meanwhile the "Petrel," hardly making any way in the landlocked harbour, had reached the mooring pointed out, and without any trouble Penarth whisked up the buoy, hauled in the rope till the bridle-chain came aboard, and secured the latter round the bitts.

"My word, you fellows have got hold of a nice little craft," exclaimed one of the Polruan Scouts with the air of a born seaman.

"Are you Sea Scouts?" asked Osborne.

"No; but there are Sea Scouts at Fowey. They've a guard-ship up at Pont Pill. You can see her from here. She's on the mud."

"That hulk with only a short signalling mast?"

"Yes, she was an old clay barge. Mr Tregaskis, who lives over yonder, gave it to them, and they've fitted it up first-rate. No, I'm not a Sea Scout, although I reckon I'm pretty handy in a boat. When I'm a bit older I want to join the navy. Have you ever seen a man-of-war?"

"Several," replied Penarth and Reid together. "You see we live close to Portsmouth," added the latter.

The Scout looked at them with envious eyes.

"My word, you are lucky," he said. "I've never seen one: you see they don't come to Fowey Harbour.

Some day I'm going to Plymouth. Father promised I should go long ago, but I haven't been yet. I've never been farther than five miles from Polruan all my life."

"I went to Bodmin Fair once," declared the second Scout. "It was grand."

At the Scoutmaster's invitation the two Polruan lads stopped to tea, and afterwards went ashore with the "Petrel's" crew, showing them the best landing place and where they could leave their dinghy in safety.

"To-morrow, if you like, we'll show you round," they said on parting. "If you come ashore for water to-morrow morning at about seven we'll bring you down a couple of dozen eggs."

That evening the Scouts spent ashore at Fowey, exploring the quaint old town and wandering along the cliff path past Ready Money Cove and beyond the ruins of St Catherine's Castle, returning just before sunset.

"I'll tell you what," said Mr Carter, as the lads were preparing to turn in, "we can't have all these good turns done to us without doing some in return. Suppose we ask those two lads to come round to Plymouth with us and send them back by train? They will then be able to see something of the battleships they were so keen about."

The proposal was carried with unanimity, and with that good resolution the crew of the "Petrel" rolled themselves in their respective blankets and were soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVI

A NIGHT OF DISCOMFORT

SHORTLY after midnight, Mr Carter was aroused from his slumbers by a strident voice shouting, "Yacht ahoy!"

Not being by any means a heavy sleeper the Scoutmaster had all his faculties on the alert the instant he was awakened, but knowing that there were several yachts moored all around the "Petrel," and being unable to satisfy himself that there was any need for his craft to be hailed, he kept to his hammock.

"Yacht ahoy!" came the voice again, this time louder and nearer. Still Mr Carter did not stir. Perhaps it was some belated paid-hand putting off to his yacht.

Ten seconds later there was a gentle bump alongside, followed by the unmistakable sound of a boathook engaging the "Petrel's" rigging screws.

Quickly springing from his hammock the Scoutmaster unlaced a part of the awning and thrust out his head and shoulders. It was not a pleasant evening to be turned out of warm blankets; it was raining, and the air was decidedly chilly, specially as he was attired in pyjamas.

Alongside the "Petrel" was a large lugger. Her mainsail had been lowered and lay in a confused heap athwart the fore-deck; her mizzen was still standing. Just abaft the mainmast was a great, hulking, bearded fisherman, wearing oilskins and sea-boots.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," he exclaimed, "but you must shift. Them's my moorin's."

"But——," expostulated Mr Carter.

"Can't be 'elped. Them's our moorin's, and we must have 'em. Us want to be ashore as soon as we can."

The Scoutmaster hesitated before replying. He had had permission to lie there; perhaps, after all, it was a "try-on" on the part of the newcomers, especially as the fishing-boat that the moorings belonged to was not coming back until Saturday night.

"I don't understand——," began the Scoutmaster.

"No matter, guv'nor. Shift your berth first, and onderstan' afterwards."

"Won't do, my man," said Mr Carter sternly, for the fellow's tone and the inconvenience of having to carry on a conversation in very scanty attire on a wet night irritated him. "We've permission from the owner's son to use these moorings."

"My word, I like that!" returned the fisherman, with a laugh that could be heard on both sides of the harbour. "Owner's son, indeed. 'Faith, no son have I, nor wife neither. Have I, Jim?"

"Not to my best knowledge and belief, Dick," replied his mate. "But perhaps this gent has been put upon by some one."

At this juncture up came Summers, Penarth, M'Kane and Osborne, who had been awakened by the conversation.

"Bless my soul, sir," exclaimed the fisherman addressed as Dick, "you've got a crew of nippers, I do say."

"Sea Scouts," explained Mr Carter, "and the lad who told us we could pick up these moorings was a Scout."

"Was he a tubby chap, wi' freckles and a mop o' red hair, sir?" asked Jim.

"That would describe him," replied the Scoutmaster.

The lugger's crew burst into a roar of laughter.

"Tommy Pentreath 'as been up to his larks agin, I

do allow," declared Jim as soon as his mirth subsided sufficiently for him to speak. "Yon child's a fair caution, the little liar. He's done you in the eye, mister. 'E ain't no Scout; 'e ain't got no feyther neither; lives wi' 'is mother, close agin t'old cross on top of t'hill, 'e does. Tell yer what, mister, we'll gi' you a 'and to shift 'er. Don't 'ee fret 'bout turnin' out: we'll moor you fair and sound."

"Yes, I war main angry," explained Dick. "But now I ain't. I'm plain-spoken man, I am. No offence, sir. You see it's very aggrewatin' a-comin' back to ourn moorin's after a long day, and findin' a strange vessel occupyin' 'em as cool as can be. But I sees now, sir, you've put upon. If us were stoppin' aboard all night we'd drop anchor and let you bide where you be; but us wants to get ashore. Just you get out o' the muck, mister; it's comin' down mighty thick. Us'll put you as all correct."

Thanking the rough yet well-meaning fishermen for their kindness, Mr Carter withdrew to the shelter of the awning, while the Scouts retired to the cabin.

"How about our eggs, sir?" asked Penarth.

"You are to go ashore in the morning and fetch them," replied the Scoutmaster with a laugh. "I give you permission."

Meanwhile the men in the lugger had passed their mooring-chain aboard their own craft and had allowed the "Petrel" to drop astern. Then, jumping into their heavy dinghy they towed the yacht clear, dropped her anchor and kedge, and reported all well.

"You're clear of everything, mister," they sung out as they rowed off. "You've a clear berth and nothin' to disturb you, so agen we ax your pardon and no offence meant."

"Nor given," called out the Scoutmaster. "Good-night."

It was some time before Mr Carter could get to sleep. He was thinking about the way in which those seemingly open and simple Polruan lads had completely taken him in. He was not angry, but rather amused, and at the same time sorry that such promising material had escaped the call of the great Brotherhood of Scouts.

"I'll make a point of seeing some of the local Scoutmasters," he declared, communing with his own thoughts. "Training those lads as Scouts would make a very interesting experiment."

An hour later Mr Carter was again aroused from his slumbers by a dull thud against the yacht's side. As he listened the noise was repeated.

"Surely those men have moored us properly?" he thought. "Or, perhaps, we have dragged our anchors and are foul of another craft?"

Bump, bump, bump.

The Scoutmaster rolled himself out of his hammock and peered under the awning. The "Petrel" was lying stern to wind, and well away from the nearest yacht.

"What's that noise, sir?" asked Leader Osborne, who had also turned out of his bunk and was standing at the foot of the companion-ladder.

"That's just what I want to find out," announced the Scoutmaster. "Would you mind passing out my oilskins. It's raining pretty hard just at present."

Osborne did as he was requested, and also donned his own oilskin and sou'wester and went on deck.

The cause of the disturbance was soon apparent. The "Petrel" had swung with the tide, which was now against the wind, and the dinghy, being light in the water, had "come home" and was bumping alongside the yacht.

Seizing a boat-hook, Mr Carter fended her off, but in less than half a minute he was back again.

"This won't do," he exclaimed. "We will get no rest to-night, besides having our paint scraped. I wonder if we could haul her on deck with the throat halliards."

"I think I know a better plan, sir," said Osborne. "I've read of it somewhere. If we lash a short length of rope to a bucket, drop it overboard and bend the other end of the rope to the dinghy's ring-bolt, she'll ride to the tide all right, sir."

"We'll try it. Be careful, Osborne. The thwarts are very slippery in wet weather, especially when you are barefooted."

The experiment was successful, and Mr Carter had good cause to thank the Leader for his suggestion. The Scoutmaster had had very little experience with dinghies as tenders to a yacht. He had just learnt one of their many wicked propensities, for hitherto the "Petrel," since in the Scouts' possession, had either been moored out of the tideway or else alongside a quay.

Hardly had Mr Carter returned to his hammock than there was a loud crash of broken woodwork for'ard. He was up on deck in an instant, and by the aid of the riding lamp sought to discover what was amiss. For quite five minutes he continued his investigations, but without success.

"It cannot be very much," he soliloquised, "or I should have spotted it. We'll find it in the morning."

There was the demon of unrest in the air that night, for with the rising of the wind the ropes began to thrash monotonously and dismally against the masts, while the rudder began to grind on its pintles with a series of thuds that seemed to shake the ship.

The Scoutmaster—even-tempered as he usually was—began to get impatient. Once more donning his oil-skins which felt unpleasantly "clammy" to his back,

he made his way for'ard and wound the staysail halliard round and round the mast and the rest of the halliards, thus effectually checking their tendency to "flog." Tightening the tiller-lines settled the business of the noisy rudder, and again stillness reigned on board save for the occasional flapping of the awning.

At six o'clock Mr Carter turned out and threw back the awning. The sun was shining brightly, the rain having ceased. Down below the lads were still soundly asleep, and out of consideration of the fact that their rest had been broken, the Scoutmaster decided to allow them an extra hour's slumber.

As the tide was now slack the Scoutmaster took the opportunity of having a swim; then, after dressing and shaving, he sat on deck to enjoy the scenery, for Fowey undoubtedly presents the best picture when the early morning sun falls aslant upon the quaint stone houses of that delightful little town.

Presently he chanced to glance casually at the fife-rail just abaft the mainmast—a horizontal piece of stout oak fixed into two uprights and provided with belaying pins to which the main, throat and other halliards are secured.

The rail—nearly two inches square—was fractured.

"That caused the noise I heard in the night," said Mr Carter to himself. "I quite see how it occurred, now that it is too late. We belayed the halliards too tightly, and the rain in the night caused them to "take up." It's lucky we are in harbour, so that we can get the damage made good."

As the clock of St Saviour's church struck seven the Scoutmaster prepared to turn out his youthful crew. To his surprise he found the Tenderfoot sitting up in his bunk in the locker and writing away as hard as his pencil could travel over the paper.

"Writing home, Webb?"

"No, sir; writing up my log. Would you like to see it, sir, in case I've made any mistakes?"

"Not yet," replied Mr Carter, wondering what excuse he could make, since under the conditions of Mr Dacres' offer he was not to supervise any of the lads' attempts in this direction. "You carry on, Webb. When the voyage is over and we've had time to settle down a bit the logs will be read out, and it will be like 'fighting our battles o'er again,' so to speak. How did you sleep?"

"Like a top, sir."

"Weren't you disturbed in the night?"

"No, sir, I don't think I stirred once."

"Lucky lad," soliloquised the Scoutmaster.

"Do you want me to row Penarth ashore to fetch the eggs those Scouts promised us, sir?"

"Ask Penarth if he is ready," suggested Mr Carter.

Greatly to the Tenderfoot's surprise he received a wet sponge full in the face from the highly indignant Penarth, who was unaware that Webb was ignorant of the midnight conversation with the fisherman.

As soon as the Sea Scouts had had a swim, Penarth and Webb were sent ashore for water and provisions.

Penarth, with two stone jars at his feet and a large wicker-basket by his side, occupied the stern-bench, while the Tenderfoot rowed.

"There's a strong tide or something," remarked Webb, as he tugged lustily at the oars. "The dinghy's going awfully hard this morning."

"Rot!" ejaculated Penarth. "You are not putting your back into it enough. There's hardly any tide to speak of."

"Then I believe we're caught in some weeds," continued Webb, who was getting quite red in the face with his exertions.

"Nonsense, man, we're almost in mid-channel," replied his companion. "Try with your oar."

The Tenderfoot thrust his oar into the water till only the loom remained out. He could not touch bottom.

"You're off colour," remarked Penarth. "Here, let me take the sculls: I'll soon make her shift."

The lads changed places. Penarth started to row, but after a few strokes he looked at Webb in obvious perplexity.

"You're right, old chap," he said. "The dinghy's as heavy as a lump of lead. The centreboard's not down, so that can't be the reason."

By this time the dinghy was about fifty yards from the "Petrel." Under ordinary circumstances she would have gone thrice that distance.

"Dinghy, ahoy!" shouted Osborne, who had noticed the slow progress of the little craft. "How about the bucket?"

"We don't want a bucket," replied Penarth. "Two jars of water will be quite enough."

"The bucket!" repeated the Leader. "The bucket—it's tied on astern of you."

"What silly juggins did that?" demanded Penarth wrathfully.

"Only your Scoutmaster," answered Osborne, joining in the general laugh. "We'll tell you about it when you return."

As soon as the bucket was hauled aboard, the dinghy was rapidly urged through the water, and in a few minutes ran alongside Polruan Quay.

"There is the boy who promised us the eggs: I believe he has them after all," exclaimed Penarth, pointing to the red-haired youth who, basket in hand, was standing at a corner of the steep and narrow street.

The Tenderfoot waved his hand in friendly welcome, but with a derisive gesture the pseudo-Scout took to his heels and disappeared.

After breakfast all hands turned to their various

duties, Osborne and Reid assisting Mr Carter to detach the broken fife-rail by the aid of the tools in the bosun's locker.

"We'll have to get assistance," remarked the Scoutmaster. "We haven't any oak on board to make a fresh bar."

"Shall I row over to the Sea Scouts' guardship, sir?" asked Reid. "Perhaps they might be able to oblige."

"Very well," assented the Scoutmaster. "I see there's some one on board, for there is smoke coming from that stove pipe aft. Of course, if they cannot manage it, you'll have to take the broken fife-rail ashore. There are one or two shipwrights' yards on the Fowey side, I see."

The hulk was lying on the mud some distance up Pont Pill—"pill" being the local name for creek. At half tide, as it was at present, a boat could get alongside. Independently of the tide the hulk could be boarded by means of a narrow plank gangway communicating with the shore.

There was no Sea Scouts' flag flying from the flagstaff: only a very dilapidated oilskin coat, its sleeves extended by means of a mop-handle, and looking very much like a scarecrow.

"Guardship, ahoy!" shouted Reid in his best professional manner.

There was no reply, but it was quite evident that the hulk was tenanted, for there came the unmistakable sound of some one sawing wood.

"Guardship, ahoy!" repeated the Scout, running alongside and making fast the painter.

"They're making too much noise for me to be heard," he thought. "I don't suppose they'll mind if I get on deck."

So saying, Reid grasped a grass-rope that trailed over the side, and, having tugged at it to make sure

that it would bear his weight, climbed up hand over hand.

On deck, the hulk looked a picture of desolation. The planks were rotten in many places, and black and green with exposure to the weather; the pitch had oozed from the seams, bringing with it fragments of oakum. The companion and skylight were destitute of paint, the glass in the latter being patched with lumps of tar and putty. A medley of nets and weed-covered grass-rope occupied the after portion of the deck, while for'ard stood a huge windlass surrounded by fathoms of rusty chain that apparently had not been moved for years.

Down below the noise of the sawing proceeded, though with frequent intervals. Taking advantage of one of these pauses, Reid tapped at the hatchway.

"What be you wantin'?" shouted a deep voice.

"Are there any Scouts on board? This is the guard-ship, I believe?"

Up the rickety ladder stamped a man—tall, broad-shouldered, weather-beaten and bearded.

"Scouts? Guardship?" he repeated. "Young man, who be you a'gettin' at? Just you hook it, or——"

And brandishing the head of a broken eel-spear the angry occupant of the hulk rushed at the astonished Scout.

CHAPTER XVII

TRAPPED ON THE HULK

PETER PENBOLLO, the owner of the hulk, was a retired fisherman of very eccentric habits and of a most unruly temper.

His pet aversion was the youth of Fowey and Polruan, and the most mischievous of the youngsters took every opportunity of aggravating the old man.

Penbollo was not a native of Fowey. Some years ago he appeared in the harbour in a lugger. The lugger he sold for a few pounds, spending a portion of the purchase money in buying the old hulk that had long lain neglected in the Pill. On this decrepit craft he took up his abode, living literally from hand to mouth, no one knowing exactly how. He shunned all advances on the part of the neighbouring inhabitants, venturing into Polruan once a week—usually on Friday night—to purchase a meagre store of provisions.

Until Reid boarded the hulk no stranger had set foot on her mouldering decks from the day Penbollo had entered into possession. Once, indeed, Mr Trewallow, the Scoutmaster of the 4th Fowey Sea Scouts, had attempted to enter into conversation with the truculent old fellow, but had been repulsed with threats and curses.

The good folk of Fowey, dearly loving a joke, had started a yarn to the effect that Penbollo intended handing over his hulk as a Sea Scouts' guardship, and this gaining the old man's ears had roused him to fury.

No wonder, then, that the unexpected appearance

and apparently colossal impudence of Reid had proved the "last straw."

Reid saw that the old man meant mischief. He could read it in those blazing, deep-set eyes. It would be of no use to attempt to argue the point, or even to explain.

The Scout leapt backwards to avoid a savage blow with the formidable weapon, then turned and made for that part of the bulwarks where he had gained the deck.

Out of the companion came the angry Penbollo, shouting, cursing and brandishing the eel-spear. Although powerfully built above the waist, the man was inclined to be tottery on his feet, and this gave the Scout a chance.

But before Reid could trust himself to clamber over into the dinghy, which necessitated a drop of about nine feet, he realised that he stood a great risk of being hurt by his pursuer. The best thing he could do was to make a rush for the gangway and get ashore. What then, he thought, would happen to the dinghy?

Peter was no mean strategist. He seemed to guess what was in the Scout's mind, for, making his way as quickly as he could to the gangway, he unshipped the plank and hauled it on deck. Then, still brandishing his eel-spear he advanced upon the luckless Reid, who straightway retreated aft.

"It means a ducking, I suppose," thought the Scout. "I'll have to be careful how I dive, or I may get stuck in the mud. It can't be very deep."

The Scout sprang upon the rickety taffrail, and was preparing to take a header, when he heard a crash, quickly followed by a thud and a howl of pain that trailed off into a low groan.

Recovering his balance, Reid turned and saw his

pursuer lying prostrate on the deck. In his haste Penbollo had trodden upon a rotten portion of one of the planks. His right foot had gone completely through, bringing him down heavily on his side. In falling his right shoulder had come in contact with the barb of the eel-spear, and the rusty steel had sunk deeply into his flesh.

Without hesitation Reid went to the old fisherman's assistance. With a firm yet quick motion he pulled the barb from the unfortunate man's shoulder; then, seizing the weapon, he hacked away the soft wood until there was sufficient room to disengage the imprisoned leg.

Old Peter's face was ashy grey in spite of his weather-beaten complexion. Reid fully expected him to faint, for the blood was flowing freely. To leave him in this state while the Scout went for assistance might be fatal. First aid must be given without delay.

Grasping a small rope-fender the Scout placed it under the head of the injured man, then making his way below he searched for fresh water. It was some time before he grew accustomed to the semi-gloom, but at length he discovered a beaker, more than half filled, and a tin bowl close handy.

Fortunately Reid made it an invariable practice of carrying his pocket tabloid first-aid case with him. Deftly he cut the rags from the man's shoulder, thoroughly washed the wound, "swabbed" it with borax, and having applied gauze drew the edges of the wound together as well as he could by means of strapping plaster.

He was just in the act of completing the last of the dressings when he heard the familiar patrol cry coming from close alongside, followed by Mr Carter's head and shoulders appearing above the bulwarks.

In five seconds the deck of the hulk was in possession of the "Seals."

It did not take long for Reid to explain what had occurred. The Scoutmaster heard and examined the lad's handiwork.

"Very neatly done," he said approvingly. "Now for the other injury. It's a compound fracture of the leg, by Jove! We'll apply first aid, and then get the man ashore as quickly as possible. Osborne, see if you can attract the attention of anyone ashore."

While the Scoutmaster, assisted by Penarth and Summers, was attending to old Peter's injuries, Webb told Reid how the Sea Scouts came on to board the hulk.

It appeared that Osborne happened to be looking through the telescope, when to his surprise and alarm he saw the infuriated owner of the hulk chasing Reid with the formidable eel-spear. Being without a dinghy the Sea Scouts could not immediately go to their comrade's assistance, while none of the yachts within hailing distance seemed to have any of their crews on board. When at length the Leader attracted the attention of a yachtsman in a craft a hundred yards away, and began semaphoring to ask for the loan of his dinghy, the man threw up his arms in a helpless manner that clearly conveyed the fact that he was ignorant of hand-flag signalling.

Without hesitation M'Kane pulled off his boots, and, not waiting to divest himself of his clothes, plunged overboard and swam to a boat that was moored a few yards away. Fortunately there was an oar in the boat, and the Sea Scout, who could scull quite proficiently, brought her alongside the "Petrel."

By this time Summers, who had taken up the telescope the Leader was using, saw Reid preparing

to dive and his sudden and unaccountable return to the deck of the hulk.

Propelling the heavy boat against an ebb tide with six on board would be no light task with only an oar over the stern, till Webb suggested using the two eighteen-foot sweeps that were lying on the "Petrel's" deck.

The proposal was acted upon, and the commandeered dinghy, "double-banked," was quickly rowed over to the hulk.

"Wot are ye a'doin' all this for me?" asked the injured man feebly.

"Because it is part of our duty to help others," replied Mr Carter gently. "Now keep as quiet as you can. I may hurt you."

"An' only a while back I wur a-chasin' that youngster wi' my eel-prong," muttered old Peter. "Sure, I can't just onderstan' it at all, I can't."

During the "setting" operation the luckless man fainted, and before he revived the Scoutmaster had deftly put the injured limb into splints.

"Attracted anyone's attention yet, Osborne?"

"No, sir."

"Well, we must rig up a derrick. This mast seems stout enough, and that old gaff will do if we make a sling-span for it. Bring the big boat round to the gangway, Summers. Osborne, Penarth and Reid—you make a start with setting up a derrick. Webb, go below and see if you can find a large piece of canvas—a hammock if there is one."

Summers sprang upon the bulwark. There he stopped.

"The tide's left both boats high and dry, sir."

The Scoutmaster gave a hasty glance and gauged the distance between the hulk and the edge of the water. He realised that with a helpless man on board

and two Scouts to keep him from slipping, it would be an impossible task to drag even the light dinghy into the water.

"Couldn't we throw out the bottom-boards, stand on them, and all heave?" suggested Reid.

"We could if the boat were not so heavily laden. Our best way is to reship the gangway and take the man ashore. There's a path over that hill to Bodinnick Ferry, and so across to the town. Don't trouble any more about the derrick: it won't be long enough to reach the bank."

Three lads, with a united heave, re-established communication with the shore, while the Tenderfoot, having found out a canvas cot fitted with eyelets, displayed his prize to his companions.

"I've looked everywhere below, sir," he announced, "and I can't find any poles suitable for a stretcher."

"Not even a handspike?"

"No, sir;" then in a lower tone he added, "There are a lot——," and his voice trailed off into a whisper.

"Humph. That matter can wait," observed Mr Carter. "What we require are some poles. Is there anything for'ard that might be made use of?"

"Only a couple of mop-handles, sir," replied Penarth.

"We could use the 'Petrel's' sweeps, sir," said the Tenderfoot.

"So we could. Thoughtful man, Webb."

The Tenderfoot and Summers lowered themselves into the borrowed boat and handed the long ash oars to their comrades on deck. The sweeps were laid two feet apart and the canvas cot placed over them and lashed underneath by light but strong cord. A blanket was rolled to form a pillow and another spread out to cover the patient's body.

"All ready now, sir."

"Look here, we've overlooked one important con-

sideration," remarked Mr Carter. "How can we take the stretcher over a narrow plank like that? Apart from the difficulty, there is every likelihood of the plank breaking under the weight of three persons."

The question was a regular poser.

Hornsby suggested sending some one ashore with a rope and hauling old Peter along the plank.

"You've forgotten his leg is broken and there's nothing to prevent his rolling over," objected the Scoutmaster.

"Couldn't two of us walk with the stretcher?" asked Osborne.

"The plank springs badly enough with one fellow walking on it. The only thing I can suggest—it will be a lengthy operation—is to set up a hawser with a travelling block and an endless line, the same as those fellows did at Mevagissey."

"Look, sir," exclaimed the Tenderfoot, pointing towards Hall Walk. "There are Scouts coming over the hill."

Webb was right. A patrol, in open order, was making its way parallel to the north shore of Pont Pill.

Osborne signalled. The lynx-eyed Scouts were not long in repíying, and in response to an urgent message for help the patrol raced down the hill, wondering by what turn of events the abode of the confirmed boy-hater had been taken possession of by a party of Sea Scouts.

"This man has met with an accident. Broken leg in addition to other injuries," said Mr Carter, returning the Leader's salute. "We cannot easily get him ashore. Do you think you could get hold of another plank or two—fairly stout ones?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Leader. "We'll manage that."

Away ran the Scouts, tearing up the incline at a speed that showed that they were in good training and

used to hilly ground. In less than ten minutes they were back again, eight Scouts carrying two substantial planks across their staves. It was then an easy matter to run each of the planks along the existing one till it reached the gap in the bulwarks that did duty for an entry port. The planks were then moved to the right and left till the three formed a broad means of communication with the shore.

"We have signalled to our chums on the other side, sir," said the Leader of the "Tigers"—a patrol of the 6th Fowey Troop, "and told them to let the cottage-hospital know that there's a case coming along."

"Thank you," said Mr Carter. "It was indeed fortunate that you came this way."

"All in a day's work, sir: is there anything else we can do?"

"Would you mind taking the patient to the hospital? If so you would do us a real good turn, for we have to get these boats off the mud. One of them isn't ours. We borrowed it without asking permission, but I think the circumstances were sufficient excuse."

"I don't think it matters, sir," replied the Leader of the "Tigers," smiling broadly. "The boat belongs to my father, and he won't be using it. But we'll take the stretcher, sir, and we'll return your oars as soon as possible."

Mr Carter had no hesitation in asking the Fowey lads to do him this favour. Every one of the Scouts wore an Ambulance Badge.

The Scoutmaster offered no suggestions: he simply stood and watched the boys at their work.

Three of these took hold of the long ash sweeps that formed the poles of the improvised stretcher. The Scouts knew that their burden was a heavy one and that it was a long up-hill journey. Gently they lifted the unconscious man from the deck and carried him feet

foremost down the steep gangway: one Scout to each plank, thus fairly distributing the strain.

As soon as they reached the bank a fourth Scout took his place at the stretcher, and at the word of command all faced about, so that in ascending the hill the patient's head would be on a higher level than his feet. And particularly Mr Carter noticed that the Scouts did not walk in step, and that the Second of the patrol kept by the side of the stretcher in the unlikely event of the injured man being jolted off his canvas cot.

"Now, lads," said the Scoutmaster, when the Fowey Scouts had disappeared beyond the summit of the hill, "we must get both boats off. Many hands make light work: off with your shoes and stockings."

By the aid of the bottom boards the Sea Scouts stood around the heavier boat, and by a succession of heaves hauled it over the intervening stretch of mud, at the same time paying out a grass-rope bent to a shackle in the forefoot of their own dinghy.

When the first boat was afloat, the bottom boards were picked up, scrubbed and replaced; and the Scouts, jumping into her, rowed her with their own oars as far as the scope of rope would allow. Then her anchor was dropped and the boat allowed to gather sternway till the strain on the cable showed that the anchor was properly holding.

"Now, lads, altogether—heave."

The "Petrel's" crew began hauling on the grass-rope attached to the dinghy. For some seconds the suction of the mud resisted their efforts, but once the little craft began to move, she glided over the slippery surface with hardly any effort, and was soon floating alongside the first boat.

"Now I want you to land Webb and me on yonder point," said Mr Carter. "We are going to stay on the hulk a little longer. The rest of you can then tow the

borrowed boat to her mooring, then leave two hands to help M'Kane get dinner, and the others are to row ashore to Whitehouse Point, find a policeman—a sergeant for preference—and bring him off to the landing-place so that he can get on board the hulk. Is that perfectly clear?"

"Yes, sir," replied Osborne.

"Then keep a bright look-out," continued the Scoutmaster, "and when I signal send the dinghy to take us back to the 'Petrel.' There will be enough water to come alongside the hulk by that time, I think: the tide is already on the flood."

It was not long before a police-sergeant boarded old Peter's strange abode.

"I've heard of the accident, sir," he began, "and I suppose you want to give me particulars."

"As I was not here when it occurred I don't think I can satisfy your curiosity, sergeant," replied the Scoutmaster. "It is for a more important matter that I sent for you. Will you step below? Mind that plank: it's rotten.

"I want you to count this over with me and take charge of it," continued Mr Carter, lifting up the lid of a locker. Within were several bags, all save one being tied up with tarred cord. Holding up the unsecured bag, the Scoutmaster emptied its contents upon the table: a heap of gold coins.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW RECRUIT

'A MUSSY on me!" ejaculated the Cornish policeman. "What do you want me to do with this lot?"

"Count it over with me, sergeant, and then take charge of it. Peter Penbollo is evidently not so poor as some people imagine. Now, let's set to: we want to finish with the business."

"I don't know so much about that, sir," rejoined the policeman. "You see, sir, if anything goes wrong wi' the old fellow, there's bound to be crowner's quest."

"Don't talk about inquests," interrupted Mr Carter. "He'll pull through all right: he's as tough as nails."

"You never knows," retorted the sergeant oracularly.

"Anyhow, we'll leave it at that," said the Scoutmaster. "Come now, let us start counting."

When the amount of the treasured coin was arrived at, it was found that old Peter had stowed away on board the hulk a sum of three hundred and fifty-one pounds in gold, eighty pounds four and sixpence in silver, and seven pounds five shillings and three halfpence in bronze, besides five French ten-centime pieces and a Jersey penny.

"Now, what's to be done, sir?" asked the policeman, staring in obvious perplexity at the sealed-up bags.

"Take it away—anywhere you like, so long as we are not worried any more about the business," replied Mr Carter. "It's too much for you to carry, so we'll put it in the dinghy and row you to Whitehaven steps. Your inspector will be the one to decide who is to take charge of it."

In reply to a signal the "Petrel's" dinghy put off, and as the sergeant and a friend of his toiled up the steep incline with the money-bags, the Scoutmaster heaved a sigh of relief.

"Now, lads, dinner: I'm famishing," he exclaimed.

Early in the afternoon a boat came alongside the "Petrel," having in her stern-sheets an elderly gentleman who introduced himself as Dr Hardiman, the Scoutmaster of the 6th Fowey Troop.

"I intended paying you a call and thanking you for the assistance one of your patrols lent us," said Mr Carter, after he had invited his visitor on board.

"Nothing to thank me for," protested the Fowey Scoutmaster. "And, after all, it seems as if they prevented you from completing your good turn."

"At any rate I must compliment you on the way those lads did the ambulance work."

"'A cobbler to his last,' you know," rejoined the doctor. "That's why all my Troop have gained ambulance badges. When I gave up practice in town and settled down here, I found time hanging rather heavily on my hands. I'm not keen on yachting, am no good at golf, but I am passionately fond of walking; so I offered my services to the Boy Scouts' Association. I was rather doubtful whether I was a little too old: you see my forehead is rapidly approaching the back of my neck; but now I find I am by no means the senior Scoutmaster—in point of age, I mean. And, believe me, I've felt years younger since I took up this pleasurable work."

"I congratulate you, sir," said Mr Carter.

"And I reciprocate the compliment, sir," replied Dr Hardiman. "I congratulate you and your lads on being the first patrol to get in touch with Peter Penbollo in any but an antagonistic manner. We

gave him up as an incorrigible enemy to the Movement: how, might I ask, did it come about?"

"So it all came about through that piece of broken wood," remarked the Fowey Scoutmaster, after Mr Carter had briefly related the story of Reid's errand to the supposed guardship. "And the damage is not yet made good, eh? If you don't mind I'll take charge of that piece of oak, and keep it as a souvenir of the 'Petrel' and her crew. Meanwhile I'll put some of my Scouts on to the job of making a new one. We may not be shipwrights, but I think we have enough lads with carpenter's and handyman's badges to be able to tackle that job."

"It's awfully good of you," said Mr Carter. "You see for one thing we haven't got the wood suitable for the purpose; for another the tools that we have on board are not the kind for that sort of work."

"Only too glad to do you a good turn," rejoined Dr Hardiman as he prepared to take his leave. "We'll have it ready by seven o'clock to-night. If you can spare the time look us up: our clubroom is on the way to the station; you cannot possibly miss it."

"Now, lads," began the Scoutmaster, after Dr Hardiman had gone ashore, "after our work this morning I think we might have a quiet ramble over on the Polruan side. There's an old church—Lanteglos it's called—which will afford a good object lesson. Perhaps we might have an opportunity of a little scouting. Judging by the land shown on this chart there ought to be good possibilities."

"Is anyone to remain on board, sir?"

"No, I don't think it necessary, especially during the daytime. I have made inquiries. It will be well, however, to leave the dinghy in charge of some one."

Away up the narrow steep road that forms the chief thoroughfare of the little hamlet of Polruan the

lads marched, till Penarth, who was a dozen paces to the front, suddenly stopped, drew aside and held up a warning hand. Then back he came cautiously till he joined Osborne.

"There's Tommy Pentreath—the chap who stuffed us up over that guardship business—just up the road a little way," he announced. "Shall we stalk him?"

"What is he doing?" asked the Leader.

"Making chalk marks on an old stone pillar," replied Penarth. "He's too busy with his mischief to notice me."

Leader and Second made their way back to the Scoutmaster and explained the situation, while the rest of the Sea Scouts eagerly listened to Mr Carter's decision on the proposal to stalk the young rascal.

"Very good," said the Scoutmaster, producing a small map of the district from his pocket. "Look here: that stone pillar, as Penarth describes it, is really an ancient cross. It's marked here, at the junction of these two roads. Now, Osborne, take M'Kane, Summers and Webb with you and work round to the right part of this building. There, you see, is another road that joins this one at the cross. M'Kane and Summers will follow the road, while you and Webb will carry on, making a detour till you are on the other side of the cross. Penarth, you take Reid and work round to the left: I see there is a footpath between these two houses. I'll keep Hornsby with me. In five minutes our preparations ought to be complete. Get as close to the cross as you can without being seen, and keep your ears open. When you hear two calls on my whistle, run in."

"And what then, sir? Shall we collar young Pentreath?"

"No, not by any means: pay no attention to him. If he runs away don't attempt to bar his passage. If he waits, well, then, perhaps we may have a few

words with him. For the present imagine you're stalking a hostile Scout."

Away scattered the patrol, while the Scoutmaster, with Hornsby, waited watch in hand till five minutes had almost elapsed. Then, taking advantage of the cover afforded by the curve of the road, Mr Carter and his companion advanced towards the agreed point of meeting.

Hardly had the echoes of the whistle died away when the patrol cry resounded on all sides as the Sea Scouts ran in towards the ancient cross.

Tommy Pentreath's guilty conscience prompted him to take to his heels, till he found Scouts running in from all directions. Then he stopped.

He was not a coward by any means. The immense disparity of strength did not frighten him. He backed, took up a position in front of an old stone trough by the side of the cross, and threw himself into a boxing attitude.

"All right," shouted Osborne reassuringly. "We are not going to hurt you: we're scouting," and as three of the Scouts ran past the young Cornish lad without hardly noticing his presence, apprehension gave place to curiosity.

"Well timed, lads," exclaimed the Scoutmaster. "Smartly done, all of you." Then, turning towards Pentreath, he continued in a most matter-of-fact tone:

"Ah, you are the lad who so kindly let us have the use of those moorings. We haven't been able to thank you before this."

The boy hung his head. He was hardly sharp enough to realise that the Scoutmaster was "pulling his leg." He was thinking out a way of explaining why the promised gift had not been forthcoming.

"Couldn't get no eggs, sir," he said, "so didn't come down this morning."

"Good intentions go a long way, Tommy: so we must thank you again for the promise of a gift."

"How did you know my name was Tommy?"

"We made inquiries. You are quite a celebrity, you know, Tommy. Every one in Polruan, we find, knows Tommy Pentreath. You would make quite a smart Scout——"

"Then you knows I gammoned you last night," said the youngster, with a touch of defiance in his tone.

"Of course," said the Scoutmaster suavely. "Of course it was a joke on your part. Perhaps you were confusing the date with the first of the fourth month. Anyway, suppose we say no more about that little incident You know, Tommy, you're a bit of a Scout already."

"No, I ain't: don't want to be no Scout. My big brother says it's all rot."

"I'd like to argue that point with your brother, I would indeed," said Mr Carter, with his best good-natured smile. "Where is he?"

"He's in prison."

"What for, may I ask?"

"Snaring rabbits over Polperro way."

"Well, in that case I'm afraid your brother and I cannot talk about our views on Scouting. But I said just now, Tommy, that you are a bit of a Scout already. Now I'll explain. You thought these lads were going to collar you, didn't you? What did you do? You stood with your back to the water-trough. Behind the trough, I notice, is a stone wall. Now anyone would have some difficulty in reaching from the top of the wall across the water-trough, wouldn't they? You knew that: that's strategy—making the best of the ground to help you defend yourself."

Tommy Pentreath's dogged look vanished at these

words of praise. His face was wreathed in a smile when the Scoutmaster finished.

"That's good," he remarked, in a self-satisfied tone.

"Of course; and you could do better than that if you were a properly trained Scout. Now why not begin straight away? We're off for a little Scouting practice: come with us. Penarth—you know Penarth, I'm sure—will give you some hints. Patrol—fall in. Right! Quick march!"

And almost before he quite realised what he was doing, Tommy Pentreath was a temporary unit of the Seal Patrol.

Towards the close of the afternoon the crew of the "Petrel" marched back towards Polruan, glowing with the healthy exercise over the lofty, breezy downs. At the old cross Pentreath stopped.

"Come along, my man," said the Scoutmaster encouragingly. "Let your friends in the village see what a fine recruit we've got. You are coming on board with us to tea again."

It was not long before the ice of reserve was completely broken, and Mr Carter learnt, almost without putting a single question, the chief features of the lad's life.

"He's not a bad little chap," he mused. "One thing about him, he's clean and tidy in his habits. He's a regular little liar, but he tells lies simply for the fun of the thing, and from no wicked motive. Considering his education is sadly neglected he's fairly smart, and now we've excited his interest, it will be a simple matter to hand him over to Scoutmaster Hardiman. I'll speak to the doctor to-night."

Mr Carter looked through the skylight. Down below, Tommy Pentreath was sitting on one of the bunks with Osborne on one side and the Tenderfoot on the other, with the rest of the "Petrel's" crew

crowded together on the opposite bunk. The intended recruit and the Tenderfoot were both blindfolded, and were engaged in a knot-making contest, for Pentreath, by reason of his constant association with the fishermen of Polruan, was fairly smart at all work in connection with knots and splices.

"Lads," said the Scoutmaster, "I want two of you to put me ashore. I'm going to fetch our new fife-rail. Well, Tommy, how goes it?"

"Fine, sir," replied Pentreath, taking the handkerchief from his eyes. "They can't teach me much over this job."

"Pentreath is a jolly good fellow at making knots and bends blindfolded, sir," announced Osborne, holding up two or three short lengths of rope for the Scoutmaster's inspection.

"Yes, these are quite correctly done," observed Mr Carter. "Now, Tommy, would you like to join the Scouts?"

"I'd like to join your lot—your patrol, I mean, sir."

"I'm afraid that cannot be done. We are leaving here to-morrow. What do you say? Shall I take you with me across to Fowey as a recruit for the 6th Troop? You must know Dr Hardiman by sight."

Tommy Pentreath did: more than that he had frequently "cheeked" the doctor.

"He'll tell me to shove on out of it," he said.

"No, he won't; I feel sure of that," responded Mr Carter briskly. "I'll ask him to take you as a recruit, and I don't mind saying that in less than three months he'll write and tell me you're made a Second-class Scout. Or, better, you will write to me yourself. I'll always be glad to hear that you're doing well in life."

"All right, sir, I'll come," exclaimed the lad. "But I may be slung out, all the same," he added.

Great was the surprise of the members of the 6th

Troop when the Scoutmaster of the "Petrel" entered their clubroom, bringing with him the hitherto untamable Tommy Pentreath.

"Is Dr Hardiman here?" asked Mr Carter.

"Yes, here I am," replied the genial Scoutmaster, dodging up from behind a table. "We are just practising some recruits in elementary bandaging. Your bit of wood-work is finished."

"Nearly, sir," interposed the Second of the 6th Troop. "I'm giving it a coat of varnish."

"Varnish! Bless me! This gentleman wants to take it away with him, and now it is covered with wet varnish."

"It can wait till to-morrow," remarked Mr Carter.

"Very well; no doubt Varco will bring it off to your yacht before breakfast. Hulloa, Pentreath! You've come to join us, I hope?"

"That is so," said the Scoutmaster of the "Seals." "He will soon be able to qualify as Tenderfoot: he knows how to make knots as well as any Scout I've seen. By the way, Tommy, do you know what a Union Jack is?"

"Yes, sir, a Pilot Jack without the white border."

"That's one definition," thought Mr Carter, "and rather a novel one. Do you know when it's flown right way up, then?"

"Rather," replied Pentreath promptly. "Toggle side up, of course."

"But suppose it hasn't a toggle?"

Tommy looked perplexed.

"Can't see no difference without," he declared.

"Varco, bring our Union Jack out, will you, please," called Dr Hardiman. "Four of you unroll it and spread it out.

"There now, my lad: that's the right way—with that broad white stripe uppermost. You see in this case

it corresponds with the toggled corner. That's one thing you must know—and I think you do know now—before you make the Scouts' promise."

"I know the Scouts' sign and salute already, sir."

Mr Carter felt it a hard matter to suppress a smile. Pentreath had already shown his ability in that direction before.

As briefly as possible Dr Hardiman explained the various Scout laws, and made the lad to clearly understand that it was not an easy matter to become a Scout, since the keeping of the Scout laws entails a considerable amount of self-restraint. Yet he put the matter in such a chatty fashion that the recruit listened with the greatest attention.

"I think he's fit," remarked the doctor, with a trace of his old professional manner.

"I think so, too," added Mr Carter.

"Just in time, Crawford," exclaimed the Scoutmaster of the 6th Troop, as the Assistant Scoutmaster entered the room. "I was about to send up for you. Here's a new recruit. Would you mind getting a hat and staff from the cupboard? Troop—close in!"

Five minutes later Scoutmaster Hardiman called out:

"To your patrol: quick march!"

Tommy Pentreath was a fully fledged Tenderfoot of the 6th Fowey Troop.

CHAPTER XIX

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER

AT ten o'clock on Friday morning the "Petrel"—bound east—under all plain sail, cleared the headlands on either side of Fowey Harbour.

The Sea Scouts were naturally loath to leave that pleasant little harbour, where, with one or two exceptions, the customary Cornish welcome had been extended to them. All being well a few hours would find them in Devon waters.

"There's not much wind, sir," observed Reid.

"There'll be plenty outside," replied Mr Carter, "and, what's more, it will be a dead beat until we ease sheets off Penlee Point. Now, you fellows below there: on deck. Bring your oilskins, for there will be plenty of spray flying about before long."

Close-hauled the stout little ketch showed that if she was not exactly speedy in turning to windward she was no sluggard. With every inch of canvas drawing and the spindrift flying in clouds over her weather bow, the "Petrel" seemed endowed with life. The Sea Scouts thoroughly enjoyed the motion, especially after a short stay in a land-locked harbour.

The Scoutmaster decided to make short tacks so as to keep within a mile or so of the shore. By this the crew could enjoy the beauties of the Cornish cliff scenery at a much closer distance than they had from the deck of the "Lady Edith."

"There's only one outlying danger between here and Looe Island that we have to look out for," said the Scoutmaster. "That's Udder Rock, and according to

the chart it is now marked by a buoy. You are sure everything is made snug down below, Osborne? There are three or four destroyers coming this way. On this tack they will pass just across our bows."

"But we are not supposed to alter our course, sir?"

"No; but what will happen is that the lieutenant in command of the leading boat will cut as close to us as he dare do. They enjoy giving small craft a good tumble in the swell."

Mr Carter was quite right in his surmise, for the flotilla, tearing at thirteen knots, passed the "Petrel" at a distance of about a cable.

Then came the swell—three steep, crested waves in quick succession. The "Petrel" cut her way through the first, dipped her bows and took the second clean over her, till her deck was awash as far as the mainmast. Then, still staggering under the blow, she received the third and last.

The only member of the crew who did not enjoy the experience was Cinders, for the luckless puppy was in the act of drinking some water in the fo'c'sle when the sudden heave sent him sliding sideways till brought up by the bulkhead. The return dip landed pup and drinking water against the rise of the chain-locker. This was more than the animal could stand. He howled and barked till Webb, scrambling down the companion and hanging on tooth and nail, picked up his four-footed friend and placed him on one of the bunks.

When M'Kane went below, half an hour later, Cinders was sound asleep, surrounded by the shredded contents of the Tenderfoot's kit-bag.

"Naughty dog!" said the lad sternly.

Cinders woke up and lazily opened one eye, then began to lick M'Kane's hands as much as to say, "I'm only having a little joke with you because you locked me in that horrid fo'c'sle and let me get thrown about.

I know you won't beat me for it, for a Scout is always kind to animals."

"Webb!" shouted M'Kane, "Cinders has been pulling a kit-bag to pieces. What did you put him on the bunk for?"

The Tenderfoot peered down the companion-way.

"Don't be too cross with him," he said. "I don't suppose it will matter very much."

"All right," assented M'Kane cheerfully. "He's forgiven. Only it happens to be your kit-bag."

At this intelligence the Tenderfoot descended into the cabin and examined the remainder of his property. A shirt, a pair of shorts, and a pair of stockings in pieces.

"You mischievous dog!" he exclaimed.

"Don't be too cross," reminded M'Kane. "I don't suppose it will matter very much."

Then, seeing the funny side of the affair, Webb roared with laughter, and Cinders was finally forgiven, though cautioned not to do it again.

"See that little village in that gap in the cliffs?" asked the Scoutmaster.

"I can see a few houses, sir," replied Penarth.

"That's Polperro. If we had time and the tide was favourable we might have put in there for a few hours, but since it isn't we must stand on. That's one of the many little Cornish harbours where they put logs of wood across the entrance in rough weather to protect the fishing-boats lying inside."

The Scouts looked curiously at their Scoutmaster, striving to detect a ring of jocularity in his voice, but Mr Carter was perfectly sincere.

"Yes," he continued. "It is quite the custom in several little harbours on this coast — Mousehole, Portreath and Trevaunance, for example, are other places. They're locally known as balks, and fit into grooves in the extremity of each pierhead, and when

in position they break the force of the waves in a most marvellous manner. Polperro is also remarkable for the narrowness of its streets. It is said that in some places a broad-shouldered man has to turn sideways to allow another to pass, but that is a slight exaggeration."

"I wish we could have a look at the place, sir," said M'Kane wistfully.

"But it can't be done," said the Scoutmaster firmly. "'Time and tide wait for no man,' and a more trite proverb never existed. If we tried to make Polperro on a falling tide the risk of running aground on hard bottom would become a certainty. Penarth, it's your trick at the helm: keep her as she is, unless the wind shifts. In twenty minutes we'll go about, and ought to fetch Looe Island on the starboard tack."

Mr Carter went below to consult the chart and write up his log. Bestowing a friendly caress and a biscuit upon Cinders he settled himself to his task.

Penarth sat on the waterways nursing the tiller in a most professional manner, although the yacht was so steady on her helm that she hardly required steering With the exception of M'Kane and the Tenderfoot, who were lying on deck for'ard, the rest of the crew were in the cockpit.

"What's that on the starboard bow, Penarth?" sung out Webb, standing up and steadying himself by the shrouds.

The helmsman looked in the direction indicated. Moving sluggishly in the heave of the waves, less than a couple of hundred yards away, was a low-lying dark-coloured object.

"I don't know," replied Penarth, altering the helm to bring the yacht's bows dead in line with it. "Seems to me like a dead fish: a whopper if it is."

The rest of the lads were on their feet by this time,

all steadfastly looking at the object that was rapidly getting nearer.

"It's moving, right enough," exclaimed Summers.

"No fear; it's the speed of the yacht that makes it appear so," replied Osborne. "Get the boathook ready, M'Kane, and probe it. Down helm slightly, Penarth."

"It's a hairy beast, anyway," remarked the Tenderfoot.

"That's seaweed you can see. It's a piece of an old mast or something of that sort. Now, M'Kane."

The "Petrel" swept by the floating object at less than a yard from it. M'Kane, steadying himself with one hand, raised the boathook and lunged.

"Metal!" he shouted, as the steel point glinted on steel, ripping off a streak of weed and disclosing a bright surface underneath. "I know what it is: it's a torpedo."

"What's that?" asked the Scoutmaster who, hearing the commotion, had come on deck. "Torpedo? Yes, you're right, M'Kane. Stand by with the head-sheets; we'll have it."

Round swung the stiff little craft, fell away on the other tack and passed the torpedo to leeward. M'Kane engaged the hook in the guard protecting the propellers.

"Got it," yelled M'Kane triumphantly.

The next instant he was all but overboard. The torpedo offered so much resistance that the Scout was forced to relinquish his hold on the boathook. But for Osborne's aid, M'Kane would have gone with the boathook.

"There's too much sea running, I'm afraid," said the Scoutmaster. "If the 'Petrel' lurched on top of that thing the result would be dangerous."

"Why, sir?" asked Osborne. "Is the torpedo charged?"

"I think not. In fact it's pretty certain that it is not. Another thing, the pressure in the air-chamber is exhausted. But the danger lies in the possibility of having a plank started by the torpedo striking us in this lop. It's a pity to have to let it go, though, as it would mean five pounds reward if we brought it into port."

"I vote we have another shot at it," cried Penarth. "It seems rotten to have to miss a chance of earning five pounds and losing a boathook at the same time."

Still the Scoutmaster hesitated. Dacres' instructions to him were that he was to run no unnecessary risk.

"It only missed the dinghy by inches last time," he said. "I think we might content ourselves by taking bearings and reporting its position to the coastguards."

"But, sir, suppose a small craft collided with it at night? We're leaving a floating obstruction that might cause loss of life," protested Penarth.

"Can't we try oil?" suggested Reid, struck by a sudden inspiration.

"Good, man!" exclaimed Mr Carter. "An excellent suggestion, Reid."

"Paraffin, sir?"

"No, colza; it's heavier. That's right. Now wait till we are twenty yards to windward of the torpedo and then drop about a pint overboard."

"A pint, sir?" asked Reid doubtfully.

"Will be more than sufficient. Now watch."

As the "Petrel" approached the desired position the Scoutmaster gave the order to throw the oil overboard. Extending in all directions the heavy liquid spread, subduing the crested waves in a most astonishing manner. The torpedo no longer bobbed up and down but floated quietly in the centre of practically calm water.

Meanwhile Osborne and M'Kane had prepared running

bowlines, while Summers had shifted the dinghy's painter to the port quarter. As soon as the "Petrel" had dropped to leeward of the circle of oiled water the helm was put down, and as quietly as the proverbial lamb she lost way close to the coveted prize.

"Got her this time, sir," shouted M'Kane, as he leant overboard as far as possible and slipped the noose over the tail of the metal cylinder.

"Take a turn—sharp!" cautioned Mr Carter. "Up helm, Penarth."

Steadily the "Petrel" gathered way, the torpedo towing five yards astern, while the dinghy, given fifteen yards of painter, strained in the choppy sea as much as she liked without fear of charging down and smashing her planks upon the captured weapon.

"I wonder how that came to be floating here?" asked Webb. "It's been in the water some considerable time, judging by the weeds."

"Not unfrequently a torpedo is lost during target practice," said Mr Carter. "And though the man-of-war might continue the search for days the thing will occasionally evade recapture. But we've collared the gentleman safely. All being well our Troop funds will benefit to the tune of a five-pound note."

During the next hour tea was partaken, the Scouts going below in relays. The only one who failed to appreciate the meal was Summers, who, told off to start the stove, found the erratic motion of the fo'c'sle too much for his peace of mind.

After tea, Mr Carter came on deck and looked rather anxiously in the direction of Rame Head, which was showing its triangular-like face just above the horizon. Only five more hours of daylight remained, and Rame Head, with Plymouth Sound behind it, was still a long way off.

"If it weren't for the easterly wind I'd make for Looe," he thought. "I suppose we had better carry on and trust to luck to get in before dark. Unfortunately the breeze seems to be falling slightly."

"Is that a boat out there, sir?" asked M'Kane, pointing to a dark speck almost directly abeam on the starboard hand.

"Perhaps: I'll get my glass."

Both the Scoutmaster and crew of the "Petrel" were exceptionally good Sea Scouts in one respect. They possessed keen powers of observation and made good use of their eyes. Like true sailormen they never neglected to take stock of any passing craft or floating object in their vicinity. It was well that Mr Carter did make use of his telescope on this occasion, for after a brief examination he exclaimed:

"It is a boat, M'Kane; and, what's more, there's something wrong with her. There's a handkerchief or something white flying from an oar. Up helm, we'll see what's amiss."

As soon as the "Petrel" was "full and bye"—with the wind abeam—she tore rapidly through the water. The continuous pitch and toss gave place to a steady gliding motion, as at a steady six knots she bore down upon the craft in distress. As for the torpedo and the dinghy they followed astern with their respective painters as taut as steel rods.

"Can you see anyone on board, sir?" asked Osborne. "I believe she's deserted."

"I can't see anyone," was the reply. "Yes, now I can, when she rolled this way. I saw a man's head. Whoever they are they are lying or sitting down on the bottom boards."

"Boat, ahoy!" hailed Osborne, as the "Petrel" came within shouting distance.

Thrice did the Leader hail, then a head appeared

above the gunwale: a sickly green face surmounted by a mop of red hair.

"Stand by and throw us your painter," shouted Osborne. "There are a couple of kids in the boat, sir," he added.

The boy addressed made no effort to comply with the request. He remained seated, his head jerking with every motion of the boat.

"Sea-sick," declared Penarth. "That's what he is."

"Be ready with the boathook, M'Kane. Whip the painter on board and take a turn round the mainmast shrouds. Hornsby, you stand by with a fender. She won't bump us very hard. Osborne and I will heave those youngsters inboard. Then let the boat drop astern."

Mr Carter spoke calmly; his crew followed his directions coolly. With little fuss, and no damage beyond the skin being barked off Osborne's knuckles, the two sea-sick boys were transferred to the cockpit of the "Petrel."

"What about the boat, sir?" asked the Leader.

The Scoutmaster considered. With a fairly heavy boat, a dinghy and a torpedo in tow, the "Petrel" would be severely handicapped. To abandon the torpedo meant throwing away five pounds; to cast the boat adrift would result in some poor boatman losing his means of livelihood. It was getting close on sunset, and the tide was making to the westward.

"Plymouth's out of the question to-day, lads," he announced. "We'll run for Looe. We may have to wait outside till the tide makes sufficiently, and it may be midnight before we are safely berthed. One blessing, we've a beam wind; that's a lot to be thankful for. There's your course, M'Kane. Keep that island well on your port hand. You can see the town beyond it."

Meanwhile the Scouts had been paying attention to the comfort of their involuntary guests. Both were wet

WITH LITTLE FUSS . . . THE TWO SEA-SICK BOYS
WERE TRANSFERRED

through with spray, and had been unconsciously sitting in the water which had found its way into the boat. They had been too ill to notice that slight discomfort.

Carefully the Sea Scouts slipped off the boys' saturated garments, then, wrapping the rescued children in blankets, put them on the bunks in the cabin. A cup of hot tea with a slice of lemon—usually an effective cure for sea-sickness—had the desired effect, and the greenish hue vanished from their faces.

They were now able to relate the circumstances under which they found themselves far out to sea in a drifting boat. One of the boys, aged eleven, was the son of a fisherman at Port Wrinkle, a hamlet lying between Looe and Rame Head. The other, aged ten, was the son of a London solicitor, who was spending his holidays at the same place.

Taking advantage of his parents' absence the elder youth persuaded his companion to go fishing, and taking possession of a boat they pushed off into the bay. Less than a hundred yards from shore they anchored, cast their lines and waited. When, after getting tired of a thankless task, they attempted to raise the anchor, the rope broke, and in the confusion one of the oars fell overboard.

Apparently neither of the lads knew how to go about the proper way to recover it. They could not scull, and before they realised what had happened they were drifting rapidly out to sea. Although they shouted and waved their handkerchiefs their plight was not noticed by anyone on shore, and an hour later they were lying, prostrate with sea-sickness, in the bottom of the boat, which was doing its best to make for the Atlantic Ocean when the "Petrel's" crew luckily observed their predicament.

Gallantly ploughing her way through the choppy sea

the yacht, in spite of the drag of her encumbrances, bore steadily in the direction of Looe.

The Scoutmaster was now at the helm, pondering over in his mind what was the best course to pursue. He knew the yacht was approaching a lee shore, and that there would not be sufficient water to enter the harbour for at least two hours. Darkness was already setting in.

"Get your flashing signal-lamp ready, Osborne," he said quietly. "We may have to use it. Penarth, see that the port and starboard lamps are trimmed, then ship them. It will be pitch dark before we arrive off the harbour. I can see the light on the pierhead."

"Vessel coming up astern, sir," announced Reid.

So intent had been the crew in looking ahead that they had not noticed a large lugger that was rapidly overhauling them.

"All right," replied Mr Carter. "She'll have to keep out of our way, being the overtaking craft. I'm jolly glad, for where she goes we can go too."

On and on came the lugger, the spray dashing in clouds from her bluff bows. Under a heavy press of sail and unencumbered with a boat astern, she was overhauling the "Petrel" hand over fist.

"Yacht, ahoy!" came a voice through the darkness.

"Ahoy, there," replied the Scoutmaster.

"Where did you pick that boat up?"

"Five miles to the south'ard."

"Anyone aboard her, sir?"

"Yes: two boys. They're on board here."

"Thanks be to God," replied the voice reverently. "They be my lad and the gen'l'man's son. Where be ye a' goin,' sir?"

"Into Looe Harbour."

"Know yer way in?"

"No."

"Right! I'll show yer. Foller me: I'll shorten sail. Get ready to anchor, and when I luff, do you luff and drop anchor."

A great weight was lifted off the Scoutmaster's mind. He knew the danger of that lee shore, for all along the shoal ground between Looe Island and the mainland the breakers were foaming over the jagged rocks; while to windward the seas were surging in a confused tumble over the shoal ground of Whitesand Bay. With the friendly lugger half a cable's length ahead he could steer the "Petrel" with absolute confidence.

Nearer and nearer the pier light loomed up till it seemed less than a hundred yards off. Then up shot the lugger into the wind, her canvas flapping wildly in the strong breeze.

"Down helm! Shake her up," ordered Mr Carter, relinquishing the helm into Osborne's hands and making his way for'ard. By the time the "Petrel" lost way the Scoutmaster had lowered the jib and dropped the anchor. Then as the ketch gathered sternway he slowly paid out the cable till she rode to twenty fathoms of it, pitching and straining in the short, steep seas.

"This is rotten," remarked Webb; "are we stopping here all night?"

"No; we must grin and bear it for an hour or so, Webb. It's part of the game. I admit the motion is very unpleasant, but we cannot help it. Down with the mainsail, Osborne: we'll keep the mizzen standing; it will help to steady her."

The two rescued boys were now fast asleep, utterly worn out by their privations. As for the "Petrel's" crew they kept on deck, crowding into the cockpit and longingly watching the harbour's lights.

"Boat coming off, sir," reported Webb.

"Then out fenders. Stand by to take her painter, Penarth. It's the lugger's boat."

"I didn't see that they were towing one, sir," observed Hornsby. "I suppose they carry one on board?"

"Yes, very frequently, especially in heavy weather. Now, ready all!"

The boat, manned by two strongly built fellows in oilskins, and with a great-coated man in the stern-sheets, came alongside. Then watching his opportunity the latter nimbly sprang upon the "Petrel's" deck.

"Keep a look-out for me on the pierhead," he bawled as the boat pushed off and rowed towards the lugger.

"Too early yet, mister," he explained, "but I'll take you right in. Why, you've got a crew o' lads."

"Yes, Sea Scouts."

"Good luck to 'em, sir. Beggin' your pardon, can I go below and see my nipper?"

"By all means," assented Mr Carter.

Down the companion the skipper of the lugger made his way, removing his cap as he did so. For a few minutes he stood by the side of the starboard bunk, looking at his son. Mr Carter, who was watching him, fancied that his lips twitched. Then, bending down, the weather-beaten parent softly kissed the forehead of the slumbering lad, turned and made his way back on deck.

The Scoutmaster noticed that the fisherman's eyes were moist. It might have been the salt spray or——

"How much do you draw, sir?" asked the skipper abruptly.

"Five nine."

"Nice draught though middlin' deep for this place. An' wot have you got astern?"

"Only a couple of boats—one of them yours—and a torpedo."

"Then you're in luck, sir," rejoined the man quietly. 'Some o' my mates have been a-lookin' out for that

there tarpeda for weeks agone. There's a ten pun' note in your pocket, certain sure."

"Ten pound note?" repeated Mr Carter. "I thought the reward was usually five?"

"Dunno. They say as 'ow this is a special case, in a manner o' speakin'. Anyhow 'tis down in black and white. I'll show you it stuck up on the wall agin t' harbourmaster's office."

"But you'll have to stand in," said Mr Carter. "You're helping in the salvage work, you know."

The fisherman brought his hand down heavily upon Mr Carter's shoulder.

"Heaven forbid that I should take a penny piece from the man as brought my youngster back to me," he exclaimed earnestly. "Come on, sir, do you heave that anchor o' yourn up, and up wi' the jib. I'll take the hellum. Now, young gents, do all o' ye get below, bar one. Must 'ave a clear deck for this job, you know."

The Scoutmaster managed his part of the business single handed. In the darkness and with the yacht pitching about as she did in the choppy sea, he would not take the risk of allowing any of his youthful crew to go for'ard.

As the jib filled, the staunch craft swung round on her heel, and, gathering way, rushed straight towards the narrow entrance to the harbour. It seemed, indeed, as if she were trying to run her bowsprit fairly against a frowning wall of rock that rose steeply on the west side. Only local knowledge could save the "Petrel" from being smashed up on the rocks on that dark night.

Suddenly the jumping motion ceased, giving place to a long undulation that seemed peaceful after the turmoil without. The "Petrel" was within the harbour.

"Down canvas, sir," called out the helmsman; then, bawling as loudly as his powerful voice would permit, "You there, Jim? Stand by to take a line!"

Away in the darkness whirled a coil of rope, and as the sails were lowered the strain on the line told them on board that the yacht was being "tracked" along the quay.

"'Ere you be, sir," exclaimed the fisherman, releasing his grasp upon the tiller. "'Ere you be, safe an' sound, an' in a nice little berth. Think yourselves mighty lucky you'm not outside. There'll be a bit o' a tumble afore marnin', I'm thinkin'."

CHAPTER XX

THE MOTOR BOAT THAT DRAGGED

"LOOK alive, lads, and get the stove going; we are simply ravenous," said Mr Carter, after the grateful fisherman had taken his departure to bring his own craft into the harbour. "Make plenty of coffee, for we must offer some to our unknown friends on the lugger."

"How about these boys, sir?" asked Leader Osborne, indicating the two who were still soundly asleep on the bunks.

"Let them sleep on. When this one's father returns he will no doubt take them ashore, or else give them a bed on board his craft. It's eleven o'clock."

"It doesn't look like making a start to-morrow, sir, by what the skipper said," remarked the Tenderfoot.

"You don't seem in a hurry to get home, I notice, Webb."

"No, sir, I don't," replied the lad emphatically. "I don't mind if it takes us a month."

As a matter of fact Mr Carter was not particularly anxious to put to sea again until there was a sufficient "slant" of wind to avoid having to make a dead beat. He alone of the crew realised the danger they had undergone, for there was bound to be a heavy breaking sea off the entrance to Plymouth Sound, while only the timely aid of the skipper of the lugger enabled the "Petrel" to steal into Looe Harbour in the darkness and with very little water under her keel.

While supper was being prepared Mr Carter went on shore—an easy matter since the ketch was lying

alongside the quay—and looked up the coastguards. Promptly four of them turned out, and, taking over the torpedo from the salvors, hoisted it on to the quay by means of a crane.

"That'll be all right, sir," said the petty officer. "If you call at the station to-morrow our Chief Officer will have the papers all ready for you to sign. If those up-topsides are fairly smart you'll get the salvage money from the District Paymaster in a matter of a week or so."

"We'll be all right in this berth when the tide ebbs?"

"Right as ninepence, sir: if I was you I'd take your throat halliards ashore and give the yacht a cant over agen the wall. Then she won't topple outwards. You're lucky to get in. We were a-watchin' you till it got dark, an' the Chief Officer said you were a stranger, and it looked like a job for us. Anyway, it was a good thing you luffed and anchored when you did. Many a chap would feel tempted to try and run in without waitin' for the tide. If you did your craft would be little better'n a barrel o' firewood. Good-night, sir, an' thank 'ee."

The coastguards had barely taken themselves off when the friendly lugger came into the harbour and berthed just ahead of the "Petrel." At the Scoutmaster's invitation the crew of three came on board, and probably in the whole career of the "Petrel" her cabin and fo'c'sle was never so tightly packed. Yet the meal was a merry one, the Cornish fishermen delighting their youthful hosts with quaint yarns in the dialect of the West Country, till some one made the discovery that it was half-past twelve.

"Come on, Peter, boy," said the skipper, gently awakening his son. "There's a bunk waitin' for you aboard the 'Susan.' Dick, do 'ee rouse Master Smith and bring him along wi' 'ee."

"Do this lad's parents know he's safe?" asked Mr Carter.

"Rayther, sir. Us sent a lad on his cycicle into Port Wrinkle to bear the glad news."

When the crew of the "Petrel" turned out at seven next morning the yacht was high and dry, resting with her starboard side against the quay. Looe looked a very different place to what it did in the darkness. The town, rising steeply from both sides of the river, was bathed in sunshine; overhead the sky was unbroken. The wind had dropped during the night, and what was more it had veered to the westward.

"Top o' the marnin' tu you, sir," shouted the friendly skipper of the lugger. "Sure now, I be wrong, though us rarely gets out concarnin' the weather an' sich-like. 'Tes goin' tu be a rale fine day."

"How are the boys this morning?"

The old man laughed.

"Sure, they be fast asleep, so 'tain't much the matter wi' they," he replied. "Now, sir, if you'll kindly send one o' your young chaps this way we've a bit o' fish as may come acceptable-like."

When Penarth returned he brought with him a basket full of fine pollack that the crew of the "Susan" had caught just before they had started in search of the lost boat.

"An hour ashore, lads," announced the Scoutmaster after breakfast had been disposed of and the yacht made all ship-shape on deck and below. "By that time there will be enough water to float us. There's a fair breeze, and three hours ought to find us in Plymouth Sound."

The stipulated time passed only too quickly, but the crew to a man "turned up" promptly.

"No leave-breakers, I see," remarked the Scoutmaster. "Now, all clear for'ard? Cast off there."

Half a dozen willing hands ashore stood by with the tracking-line ready to give the Sea Scouts a hand. In another moment the "Petrel" would have started on her resumed voyage, when a well-dressed man leapt from a bicycle and shouted, "Hold on a minute."

"Belay, there!" ordered Mr Carter; then as he looked inquiringly at the newcomer:

"Mr Carter, I presume?"

"At your service."

"My name's Smith. You helped my boy out of a nice old mess. I've come to thank you and your crew for your most timely assistance. Don't know how to go about it, 'pon my word. I hardly——"

Mr Smith, speaking in broken sentences, ended off abruptly. He, a solicitor, who in town had a steadily rising reputation for smart cross-examination, was overcome by emotion. He stood and looked helplessly at his benefactors.

"Of course we were glad to be able to do it," said Mr Carter. "After all, it was not so very much to do."

"It meant a lot to me," rejoined the solicitor. "Look here: how can I show my gratitude in a practical way?"

Mr Carter shook his head.

"Your thanks are quite sufficient," he replied. "We look to no other reward merely for the sake of doing a good turn."

Mr Smith held up his hands in a deprecatory manner.

"But, really——," he began.

"No, sir," expostulated the Scoutmaster, "we really cannot accept any reward—can we, lads?"

A decided chorus from the "Petrel's" crew bore ample testimony to their Scoutmaster's words.

"I'll take good care to see that you do receive a tangible recognition of your good work," exclaimed Mr Smith, as he took his leave.

But Mr Smith was one of those who are ready to

promise anything on the spur of the moment. By the end of that day his resolution wavered, and long before the end of his holiday he had dismissed the subject from his mind. At any rate neither Mr Carter nor the patrol ever heard of or from him again.

Once again the "Petrel" prepared to leave the hospitable jetty when a cart rattled noisily down the main street on to the quay, and the skipper of the "Susan," red-faced and puffing like a grampus, leapt out and lurched in true sea-dog fashion towards the yacht.

"Sure, I thought as 'ow I'd be too late," he gasped, well-nigh breathless after being jolted over four miles of lumpy road in a springless cart. "I've just a'got a little memento (momentum, he called it) for them plucky lads o' yourn."

Without further ado he pushed a large brown paper parcel into the Scoutmaster's hands.

"What's this?" asked Mr Carter curiously.

"Open it an' see, sir."

When the paper was removed the parcel was found to consist of a painted box with a glass front. Within, backed by a sky of vivid blue and riding on an even keel in an angry sea, was a perfect model of the lugger "Susan."

"Thought you'd be so kind as to akcept this'n bit o' work o' mine—an' 'tes all my own work. A real model o' my lugger, prop'ly built an' planked up. Although I says it as shouldn't, a finer bit o' work was never made of a real Cornish lugger. All same, you'm most kindly welcome."

"Thank you ever so much," said Mr Carter. "Lads! Three cheers for the skipper of the 'Susan.' I don't know your name?"

"Plain Garge Carclew," replied the skipper, raising his hat in response to the Scouts' cheers. "Now, don't let I keep you: wind and tide's fair, so good luck to 'ee

all an' hearty thanks for what you've done for my little lad. Heave away, Jim! Mind you give the pierhead a wide berth, sir. It shoals a bit, you'll find."

Under "three man power" the "Petrel" stemmed the rising tide, the crew making sail as she swept past the high ground on the east side of the harbour. Before she was abreast of the pierhead a puff of wind filled her canvas.

"Right ye are, sir," shouted the men ashore, at the same time casting off the tow-line. "Good-bye, lads, an' don't forget Looe."

"That we won't," shouted Osborne in reply, and another round of cheering was given in token of farewell to the last of the Cornish fishing hamlets that the "Petrel" was to visit during this cruise.

Nearer and nearer loomed the triangular-shaped Rame Head till it was abeam; then Penlee Point and the greater portion of Plymouth Sound was opened out.

"East or west passage, sir?" asked Osborne, who was steering.

"The east," replied the Scoutmaster. "There's plenty of water inside the Breakwater. It will give us a good opportunity of having a look at that marvellous work."

While Mr Carter was explaining how the Breakwater was constructed—resting on an artificial hill of large stones which had been more or less indiscriminately dumped overboard from lighters and allowed to settle on the bottom of the sea—the "Petrel" had rounded the eastern end of this stupendous work and was heading straight for the extremity of Mount Batten Pier.

"There's the Scouts' camp, sir," exclaimed Penarth, pointing to a number of semi-circular lines of tents pitched on the sloping sides of a grassy hill. "What a ripping place to camp. Shall we try and signal them?"

"I don't think we need do that," replied the Scout-

master. "There's a boat ahead, and if I'm not very much mistaken our friend the Assistant Scoutmaster is on board."

Mr Carter was right. A number of the Scouts of the 31st Stonehouse Troop were out fishing in Batten Bay under the charge of Mr Trevena.

"Hulloa," exclaimed the latter affably, when he recognised the crew of the yacht. "So you've arrived? My word, you've distinguished yourselves this trip already."

"Which way are you going?" asked Mr Carter, observing that the Scouts were hauling up the anchor.

"Into Clovelly Bay, that's a part of the Catwater."

"Throw us your painter, then; we're bound that way. Now," continued the Scoutmaster when the boat was safely in tow, "what's this about our having distinguished ourselves?"

"Why, there's a column in the *Western Gazette* about that fire close to Falmouth, and another about how you helped the Mevagissey Sea Scouts at the wreck of some vessel a few days ago."

"Wish to goodness they'd let us alone," growled Mr Carter, with unfeigned indignation. "It looks as if we have been blowing our own trumpets."

"Anyway, there it is," replied Mr Trevena. "But I'm glad you've arrived at Plymouth. I've been speaking to our Scoutmaster, Mr Dawe, and he quite agreed with the proposal to defer our sports till you turned up. Will Monday suit you?"

"Yes," assented Mr Carter after a short deliberation, "I think we can stay over the week-end."

"Good," added the Assistant Scoutmaster enthusiastically.

The two remained in conversation for some time, Mr Carter occasionally giving a look ahead to see that

Osborne was keeping a correct course. Presently the "Petrel" rounded the rocky promontory of Mount Batten and opened up the spacious anchorage of the Catwater.

"Would you mind casting off our painter?" asked Mr Trevena. "We're putting in here. There's a good anchorage for you just ahead of that topsail schooner. You'll have ten feet at low water at least."

The "Petrel" brought up and moored in the berth indicated, and having assured himself that all was snug, Mr Carter "piped down" the crew for tea.

It so happened that a short distance away a motor launch had anchored. She was one of those unsightly craft that resembled a tramcar stuck in the hull of a large rowing boat, for the greater part of her consisted of a lofty, top-heavy cabin-top with an excessive array of square windows, each decorated with a vivid red plush curtain.

The owner, one of those marine motorists whose knowledge of navigation was very limited, and whose lack of the rudiments of seamanship was a source of perpetual worry to almost every yachtsman within the limits of his cruising ground, happened to have a large party of guests on board. When tea-time arrived they retired to the "glass-house," having thrown a small anchor and warp overboard.

Directly the ebb began to make with any degree of strength, the anchor, totally inadequate for the task assigned to it, began to drag. In blissful ignorance the marine motorists continued their feast, till their jovial gathering was rudely disturbed by the "Petrel's" bowsprit end crashing through one of the panes of glass, catching the careless owner fairly in the back and forcing him across the table. Tea-cups, plates, saucers and eatables were scattered in all directions, while the guests, terrified out of their wits, rushed madly out

of the cabin, leaving their host prostrate amidst the wreckage of the feast.

Hearing the crash the "Petrel's" crew hurried on deck. They took in the situation at a glance, and acted accordingly. Osborne and Penarth seized a boathook, Reid and M'Kane took hold of an oar, and the four lads worked their hardest to push the motor-launch clear of the ketch's bowsprit. But the task was beyond their combined power, for the floating "tramcar," being broadside on to the sweep of the tide, was pinned tightly across the "Petrel's" bows.

As soon as the ill-assorted crew of the former had recovered from the first shock, the owner, steadying himself by the handrail of the cabin-top, launched out into a torrent of abuse.

"What in the name of thunder do you mean by ramming my boat, you careless young scoundrels?" he shouted. "Youngsters like you have no right to be trusted on the water. I'll have the law of you, I will. I will! Look at the damage! Ten quid won't cover it!"

The Scoutmaster signed to the lads to maintain silence, and allowed the irate marine motorist to exhaust his vocabulary. Then another of the incompetents took up his parable and spoke. After a while it gradually dawned upon him that something was not quite right, Mr Carter's coolness and patience metaphorically capsized him, and he shut up.

"Any more remarks, gentlemen?" asked the Scoutmaster, in even tones. "No? Then perhaps I might be allowed to say a few words in reply. Far from being the offending craft our yacht has been fouled by your boat. We are moored in exactly the same berth as we were when we first brought up here: you have dragged your anchor. If you take the trouble to verify your position by cross-bearings the truth of my remarks will become apparent."

The owner stood open-mouthed. He had not the faintest idea of what the term "cross-bearings" meant, but when he did look about him, he saw that his motor-launch was no longer in the same position as when he had thrown the anchor overboard.

"Anyway, you might give us a hand," he said ungraciously, without making any attempt to apologise for his rudeness.

"With pleasure," replied Mr Carter. "Say what you want done and we'll do our best."

Several of the more energetic of the motor-launch's crew began to haul away at the end of the "Petrel's" bowsprit, while the Scouts resumed their efforts with the boathook and sweep. Luckily the "Petrel's" bowsprit was a stout one, or it might have snapped under the ill-directed efforts of the lubberly crew of the launch. For five minutes they heaved, pulled and sweated, but without result. They might just as well have attempted to open a lock-gate against a full head of water.

"The tide will be ebbing still more strongly in a few minutes," observed Mr Carter.

"Then can't you run a line out to yonder vessel and haul us off?" asked the well-nigh breathless owner.

"Useless. All the hauling we could do would not pull you clear. Our bowsprit would carry away nearly the whole of your cabin if we did."

"This beats me," remarked the man dejectedly.

"Then suppose we have a shot at it? We'll have you clear in a jiffy," said Mr Carter.

"Swank," retorted the other contemptuously. "I don't believe a lot of youngsters like yours can manage it."

"No," rejoined Mr Carter. "We don't intend to manage to swank. Throw us a line, will you, and make fast your end: round that bollard for'ard."

Obediently the launch-owner complied, at the same time making a "granny" of wondrous design, that under a heavy strain would require an axe or at least a marline-spike to unfasten it.

"Osborne," said the Scoutmaster quietly. "That coil of three-inch rope: make one end fast to the mizzen-mast below the goose-neck, pass it aft through the fairlead and then forward outside everything."

Deftly the Leader went about his work, and in a very short space of time handed the other end of the rope to Mr Carter.

Having satisfied himself that the rope was clear of everything, the Scoutmaster told Hornsby to lean over the bow and secure it with a rolling hitch to the cable.

"Now, M'Kane, give her as much chain as we have on board. Slowly with it, mind."

As the chain was paid out the strain was taken by the rope. Round swung the "Petrel," stern to tide, held by the three-inch manilla passing through the after-fairlead. The tide that hitherto had been pinning the motor-launch against the yacht's bows now acted in an exactly opposite direction, and the floating "tramcar" disengaged itself as easily as anything, bringing up by means of the rope between her and the "Petrel."

It was a keen temptation on the part of the Sea Scouts to say, "How's that, umpire?" to the churlish owner of the launch. Instead, Osborne and Webb went on board, hauled up the well-nigh useless anchor and coiled the warp neatly away. Then, having swept up the broken glass that littered the deck, and made everything as shipshape as possible, they returned to their own craft.

Later on, when the motor-launch was about to cast off, Mr Carter overheard one of the guests remark to the owner:

"This is the last time I'll trust myself on your dashed

orange-box, Jim. 'Pon my word the smallest of those Sea Scouts knows a jolly sight more about a boat than you do. Take a tip from me, old man, and go in for gardening. That's more about your mark."

And the Scoutmaster had to beat a hurried retreat into the cabin to conceal his feelings.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BURGLAR

MONDAY came, fine and bright: just the ideal day for the Scouts' sports.

Shortly after breakfast, a boat containing a Second and member of the 28th Plymouth Troop of Sea Scouts came alongside.

"Our Scoutmaster's compliments, sir," said the former, saluting Mr Carter, "and he sent us to ask if we may act as ship-keepers while you are at the sports."

"It's very kind," replied Mr Carter, "but don't you want to take part in any of the events?"

"Not exactly, sir. We were going to look on. You see our Troop have just had their camp at Cawsand, so it really doesn't matter very much if we do give the sports at Bovisand a miss. And we'll like to be able to do you a good turn, sir."

"Very well," assented Mr Carter. "It is most kind of you. What time do you think the sports will be over?"

"Not until dusk, and then there will be a camp-fire, sir," replied the Second. "We can remain on board till ten if you like. I'll go ashore with you in your dinghy and bring her back. When you return, if you will give three short whistles I'll come ashore for you."

An hour's quick walk with plenty of up-hill work brought the "Seals" to the Scouts' camp, where five Troops from the "Three Towns" were enjoying a holiday under canvas.

Assistant Scoutmaster Trevena took Mr Carter under his wing and introduced him to the rest of the officers

while the crew of the "Petrel", were soon appropriated by groups of Devon lads whose ideas of hospitality were sincerely demonstrative.

Directly lunch was over the sports began, and were carried on with a zest that plainly showed that there were no "slackers" amongst these sturdy Scouts, while considerable ingenuity had been brought into play to devise novel forms of competition.

At length "item eight" appeared on the board. "Item eight" was an obstacle race limited to the Sea Scouts of the "Petrel." The obstacles consisted of a six-foot trench with four feet of water, a wall of planks five feet in height and without any footholds, a horizontal bar twelve feet from the ground to which were attached half a dozen unknotted ropes, and lastly a number of tubs, open at each end, suspended from a stout spar seven feet in height, the tubs being only a few inches clear of the ground.

Amid the cheers of the onlookers, for in addition to the local Scouts there were more than two hundred relations and friends, the seven members of the "Petrel's" crew lined out.

A few moments' suspense, and bang! went the pistol.

The water-jump presented little difficulty, Osborne clearing it first, followed by Hornsby and M'Kane; Penarth, Reid and Summers bunched together, and Tenderfoot Webb four yards in the rear.

Over the plank wall the Leader of the "Seals" scrambled, only to fall on the other side, M'Kane alighting on top of him. By the time they recovered their feet the rest were attacking the ropes, and since there was one rope short, Osborne had to wait till Penarth, the first one over, had relinquished the one he had made use of. Thanks to their life on board, the obstacles did not present the difficulty the promoters of the event had expected, and by the time the foremost

of the competitors reached the barrels, Osborne had regained second place and the Tenderfoot had fallen back to last man.

Without a moment's hesitation, Penarth began to scramble through the tub, and then the fun commenced. Each tub was suspended by a double rope twisted nearly twenty times. To keep the tubs in this state of tortion, strands of marline had been attached to them, so that as soon as the whole weight of the competitor was thrown upon the suspended barrel the strands would break.

Before he knew what was happening, Penarth found himself being twisted round and round inside the tub like a top, till quite dizzy he shot out on to the ground and losing his bearings started to run in the direction from which he had come.

Almost the same thing happened, to the rest of the competitors, and amid the shouts and laughter of the spectators six of the "Petrel's" crew, staggering under the effect of dizziness, were temporarily helpless.

But Tom Webb, though a Tenderfoot, was not devoid of cuteness. He waited till the ropes supporting Penarth's tub had untwined, then slipped through the obstacle without the faintest difficulty. Comparatively fresh, he ran over the finishing line amid the cheers of the on-lookers, while Summers, who was the first to recover from the effect of the novel whirligig, came in a bad second.

In the running races the visitors fared indifferently. Possibly this was due to want of practice, since they had had little opportunity during the last few days, and any period afloat, however much it improves one's "sea-legs," adversely effects both running and walking powers.

Osborne alone made a show in the mile flat, coming in fifth, but in the shorter distances both he and his companions were no match for the fleet-footed Devon Scouts.

The "Seals" had their revenge, however, in the tug-of-war. Hauling together on a rope was just their mark, although their opponents were not to be despised. For quite five minutes neither side showed any particular advantage, the knot hovering on both sides of the crease with complete impartiality. At length the 31st Stonehouse Troop tried the overhand pull, and that was their undoing, for with a lusty heave the "Petrel's" crew brought their opponents over the line in a struggling mass of humanity.

Throughout the long afternoon the sports continued till tea was announced. After this came Troop displays till the lengthening shadows warned the lads that night was approaching.

It was one of the jolliest camp-fires the Sea Scouts had ever attended, and not until Mr Carter called attention to the fact that it was half-past nine did the lads realise the flight of time.

Escorted by their chums of the Stonehouse Troop the "Seals" formed up and commenced their march back to their floating home. When about half-way to the shores of the Catwater the Scouts were hailed by a young servant girl, whose agitation was so great that it was some time before Mr Carter and Osborne could form any definite idea of what she wanted.

Finally the girl managed to explain that burglars were busy in her mistress' house.

"Where is the house?" asked Mr Carter.

The girl pointed to an isolated building standing about two hundred yards from the main road, its position being clearly shown by the fact that there were lights burning in both the ground floor and upstairs rooms.

Just then a piercing shriek for aid came from the house.

"'Tes mistress," exclaimed the girl; "they be a-murderin' her for certain sure."

"Send two of your lads for a policeman, Trevena," said Mr Carter to his Assistant Scoutmaster of the Stonehouse Troop. "Let two more stay with this girl: she's almost frightened to death. Now, lads, double."

Through the gate and up the broad gravel path Scouts and Sea Scouts tore, till they were brought up by meeting with the elderly maiden lady who occupied the house.

"It's all right now, madam," said Mr Carter courteously and reassuringly. "We must have frightened them away. In any case we'll surround the house while some of us search every room. The police will be here shortly, I expect."

"They're still there," declared the lady in a frightened voice. "Listen, you can hear them moving about."

A series of thuds like that of a mallet striking the floor seemed to bear out the owner's statement.

"Noisiest burglars I have ever heard of," commented Mr Trevena. "They must have heard us coming."

"They are desperate men, I feel certain," wailed the lady. "When I shrieked they didn't stop. I believe they're knocking away the wall round the safe."

"Surround the house, lads," ordered Mr Carter. "Those of you who haven't staves keep behind those who have. If anyone makes a bolt for it, don't stop to ask questions, but trip him up."

Swiftly the lads took up their indicated positions till a ring of Scouts with a sprinkling of Sea Scouts encircled the house. Still the hammering noise continued.

Pushing open the door which had been left ajar, Mr Carter gave a shrill blast upon his whistle. The sound echoed and re-echoed through the building; then with a succession of rapid thuds the intruder or intruders descended the stairs.

The hall was practically in darkness, for only a gleam

of light came from the half-open door of the dining-room. The Scoutmaster raised his stick, and in a loud voice summoned the burglars to surrender.

A swiftly moving object darted across the floor of the hall and entered the room. Then the thuds recommenced, accompanied by a succession of crashes of broken china. In the midst of the hurly-burly Tenderfoot Webb's voice was heard shouting:

"All right, sir, I've collared him."

The Scoutmaster, followed by Mr Trevena and several of the lads, rushed into the dining-room to find the Tenderfoot holding a huge, struggling tomcat in his arms. The animal's head was firmly fixed inside a heavy earthenware jug, and it was its frantic efforts to rid itself of this encumbrance that had caused the mysterious uproar.

When the animal had darted into the lighted room, Webb had been looking through the window, which was half open at the bottom.

"Be careful, Webb," cautioned Mr Carter hurriedly "Look out——"

The warning came too late. The terrified creature ripped the Tenderfoot's sleeve from shoulder to wrist, and with a frantic bound leapt from his grasp.

For the next two or three minutes the work of destruction continued, the cat running furiously round and round the room and cannoning into everything in its way, smashing almost every fragile article in the place; and it was not until Mr Trevena caught and held the creature between his leather gaiters that comparative quietude was restored.

"An empty haversack there," ordered Mr Carter. "That's right, Summers, slip it over the cat's body. Mind the claws."

As soon as the animal was rendered practically harmless the Scoutmaster attempted to remove its

ponderous head-dress, but all to no purpose: it was wedged on so tightly that nothing short of smashing the jug could rid the terror-stricken animal of the encumbrance.

"An axe: Dawe, have you yours?" asked the Assistant Scoutmaster.

An axe was immediately forthcoming, and with a sharp tap Mr Trevena cracked the jug.

"Mind its teeth," exclaimed Osborne, for the cat was "swearing" furiously and snapping as it attempted to turn upon its captors.

"Stand aside, you lads," said the Stonehouse Troop's officer, and bearing the haversack to the open window he released the captive. With a final vicious spit the cat disappeared into the darkness.

"That's settled the burglar scare," declared Mr Carter, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "The best thing we can do is to reassure the good lady, send and stop the police from coming, and get back to the 'Petrel.' It's nearly half-past ten already."

Two more of the Stonehouse Troop were dispatched to inform the police that their presence was not required, and to bring back their comrades who had been sent at the first alarm to summon the officers of the law. This done Mr Carter and Mr Trevena made their way to the place where the still trembling lady was waiting under the protection of the two Scouts.

"I should not have thought of such a thing," she declared. "Oh dear, I'm all of a shake. I don't believe I can stay in that house with only Jane to keep me company. My nerves are all on edge."

It was no exaggeration on the old lady's part. She was almost on the point of collapse. The two men exchanged glances.

"This won't do," said Mr Trevena in an undertone. "We must get her indoors and send for a doctor. Any-

how, don't you wait, Mr Carter. We'll see to all that. Phillips, you run as fast as you can to Oreston and find a doctor; Coombes and Yeo stay with me till the doctor arrives; Matthews, you take charge of the rest of the Troop and return to the camp. Explain why we are detained. Now, madam, suppose you go indoors. We are going to wait outside till daybreak, so you need not be in any alarm now. Here is your maid."

"Well, good-bye, Trevena," said Mr Carter, holding out his hand.

"Good-bye," said the Assistant Scoutmaster. "If we don't see each other again, good luck and a pleasant voyage."

The clocks were chiming eleven when the "Petrel's" crew gained the shore. Promptly the signal was answered by the Sea Scouts who had so ungrudgingly offered their services as ship-keepers, while Cinders nearly fell overboard, so great was his joy at his friends' return. With many thanks and apologies for detaining them so long over the fixed time, the Scoutmaster and the "Seals" bade their brother Sea Scouts farewell.

Half an hour later the "Petrel's" crew were lost in a deep, dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XXII

"A SCOUT IS A FRIEND TO ANIMALS"

NEXT morning, when all hands turned out to bathe, Cinders was missing. Usually the pup was one of the first to go overboard, for M'Kane had trained him to leap into the water without hesitation, and until the Sea Scout was ready to climb on board again the dog would make no attempt to come out. All M'Kane had to do was to say, "Now, old boy, out we go," and Cinders would place his fore-paws over the lad's shoulder and allow himself to be lifted on to the deck.

But upon this occasion no Cinders was forthcoming.

"Come along, old boy," called out M'Kane.

There was no response.

M'Kane whistled.

"I believe he's still fast asleep," he remarked, but on going forward to the place where Cinders generally slept, on an old rug in the angle formed by a part of the cabin-top, he found that the pup's bed was deserted. His biscuits and water were untouched.

"He's not here," announced M'Kane, with a tinge of anxiety in his voice.

"Not there?" exclaimed several voices. "Where can he have got to?"

"I hope he hasn't fallen overboard," said Penarth. "Perhaps the 'Petrel' might have rolled in the night."

"I don't remember any unusual motion," remarked Mr Carter. "Besides, Cinders is fairly cute. Perhaps he's sneaked down below and is rolled up in one of the lockers."

All thoughts of bathing were temporarily put on one

side, and the Scoutmaster and crew busied themselves by thoroughly exploring both cabin and fo'c'sle. The search produced no result except to deepen the mystery.

The Sea Scouts even examined the folds of the mainsail in case the pup should have contrived to crawl in out of sight, while Webb looked over the bows, half hoping that in the event of his pet falling overboard he might have found a refuge on the bobstay.

The after locker and those devoted to the stowage of sails were thoroughly overhauled. Every nook and cranny on board that the lads could think of was subjected to the closest scrutiny.

Reluctantly the crew were obliged to come to the conclusion that Cinders had been lost overboard. It was one of those occasions when the Scouts could not keep smiling; indeed several of them looked suspiciously watery about the eyes.

Suddenly Reid gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, there he is!" he said, pointing towards a corner of the cockpit. There, partially concealed by a large water-beaker and lying on his side on the leaden floor, was poor Cinders.

With a shout of delight Webb lifted him out, only to change his tone to one of dismay. The pup's body was stone cold and a film overspread his eyes.

"What's the matter with him, sir?" asked the Tenderfoot in alarm.

"Matter enough, Webb. It's distemper, I'm afraid."

"But he was all right last night, sir."

"That may be. Anyhow, the poor little animal has done the worst possible thing. With his body in a fever he has been lying on the cold lead. There's no time to be lost. Wrap him up in a rug, Webb. We must get him ashore as fast as we can and take him to a vet."

In double quick time the Sea Scouts dressed, and manned the dinghy.

"Where to, sir?" asked Osborne.

"Over there, to Sutton Pool. That's your best chance."

Bending to the oars with a will, Osborne and Penarth made the dinghy simply fly over the water. The Tenderfoot steered, while M'Kane, holding his pet in his arms, sat upon the stern grating.

The clocks were striking five as the boat ran alongside the steps by the side of the wharf-wall. Quickly yet gently M'Kane stepped ashore, and accompanied by the Tenderfoot started on his search for a vet.

There were but few people about, and none seemed to be able to give the desired information. Again M'Kane looked anxiously at his burden, the Scoutmaster's words, "There's no time to be lost," ringing in his ears.

At last a brass plate bearing the words "Veterinary Surgeon" caught the Tenderfoot's eye.

"Here we are, M'Kane," he said, pointing to the house. "I'll ring."

At the third attempt the door was cautiously opened, and a shock-headed man thrust his face through the narrow space between the door and the door-post.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Our dog's very ill," replied M'Kane.

"Well, I can't help it, can I?"

"But aren't you a vet?" asked the Sea Scout in desperation.

"No, I'm not. The gov'nor's away; won't be back before this evening. 'Sides, what do you mean by turning me out of my bed at this hour of the morning?"

And without further ado the churlish manservant slammed the door.

Heavy-hearted the Scouts turned away and resumed their quest. Presently M'Kane called his companion's attention to another brass plate on the door of a large imposing-looking house.

"That won't do," objected the Tenderfoot; "that says, Physician and Surgeon — hours of consultation 10-11 A.M.; 6-8 P.M."

"Good enough for me," replied M'Kane, "I'll gladly pay every penny I have in the bank, if the doctor will tell me what to do. He's bound to know."

With considerable trepidation the Tenderfoot rang the night-bell, arguing that the medical man would doubtless still be in bed. Both lads felt their courage oozing out of their boots as they waited; it was only the thought that poor Cinders was in danger that compelled them to seek an interview with the unknown doctor.

After quite three minutes had elapsed the Sea Scouts heard the sound of slippered feet shuffling down the stairs and across the hall. The door was opened, and a tall, heavily built man confronted them.

His face was round and excessively plump, his eyes twinkled behind a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, and in spite of the fact that he wore only a dressing-gown over his night attire, he did not seem at all put out at being called up by two lads in Sea Scouts' rig.

"Well?" he asked, in a deep rolling voice. "What can I do for you?"

"Please, sir, our puppy is awfully ill——"

"But I'm not a dog-doctor, my lads."

"We know that, sir; but we cannot find a vet," replied M'Kane in desperation. "Please do look at him and do something to make him well. We mean to pay you. Do, please."

"Bring him in," said the doctor, leading the way into the surgery and making up a dark-looking mixture. "I'll see what I can do. Poor little beast; it's distemper. Now, hold him out, so: that's right, now I can get to him."

Tenderly—ever so tenderly—the doctor's great

fingers closed over Cinder's mouth and dexterously opened the pup's jaws. Then, without a drop being spilt, he poured the contents of the phial down the dog's throat.

Cinders was too weak to resist. He gulped feebly and lay quietly in M'Kane's arms.

'Can you use a needle?" demanded the doctor, abruptly turning towards the Tenderfoot.

"Yes, sir," replied Webb.

"There's a needle and thread; now, you other lad, put the patient in this rug and wrap him up with a roll of flannel. That's right; now, my lad, stitch it up so that it cannot come undone. There, that's all I can do at present. The rest is merely a matter of time."

"Can we take him away with us, sir?" asked M'Kane.

The doctor smiled.

"Yes, if you want to bury him," he replied. "Otherwise it would be advisable to let him remain here a week or so. Why did you ask? I suppose you are leaving for Gosport some time to-day?"

"We are, sir," said Webb, considerably astonished. "How did you know that, sir?"

"Considering that you have '9th Gosport Sea Scouts' on your shoulders the explanation is not so very difficult," remarked the doctor. "I might also add that you belong to the yacht 'Petrel,' and you are on your way from Falmouth to Portsmouth, and you put into Fowey a few days ago. Now, how did I know that?"

The big man's eyes twinkled in a manner that completely disarmed any suspicion of awe that might be lurking in the minds of his young clients.

"I don't know, sir," replied M'Kane. "I don't think we've seen you before. Perhaps——"

He paused, not liking to suggest that the doctor had

seen in the papers an account of their doings at Helford and Mevagissey.

"I may as well tell you. I've a great friend at Fowey—Dr Hardiman. I was with him last week-end, and he spoke about your visit. No, I'm not a Scoutmaster. I almost wish I were, but my practice would not permit. All the same I've often been grateful for what Scouts have done for me at one time and another —'good turns,' I think you term it. Now, don't worry about your dog. I'll do my very best for him, and when he's well—as I sincerely hope he will be—I'll send him on to you by train. When are you sailing?"

"At two o'clock this afternoon, sir."

"Very well; if you can find time you can call here at twelve and see how the patient is progressing."

"Thank you ever so much, sir," exclaimed M'Kane gratefully. "If you don't mind could you give me an idea how much it will cost?"

"Let me see," said the doctor, tapping his forehead as if he were working out a mental problem. "Let me see: say fifteen days' medical attention, board and residence. I don't want to make the account too stiff. Suppose we say——"

He paused to study the faces of the two visitors. M'Kane had visions of a sum far exceeding that at his disposal in the Post Office Savings Bank. Webb thrust his hands into his pockets in the vain hope of finding a few stray sovereigns.

"Suppose we say, well, a letter of thanks when the patient is restored to his friends: how will that do?"

For several seconds neither Scout could grasp the significance of the doctor's kindly joke.

"It is awfully good of you, sir," they both exclaimed.

"Very well: that's a bargain. Now, before you go I want you to take this: it's a bottle of sublimate solution. When you get on board wash down the

place where your dog was lying, and give your hands a thorough scrubbing. It is very necessary in the case of distemper. Now, good-bye for the present. I shall expect you at twelve o'clock. Don't worry, I think your puppy will pull through."

When the two lads gained the street they took to their heels and ran for the quay, overjoyed at their good fortune.

"Hurrah, Osborne!" shouted Webb. "Cinders is doing well. He'll soon be all right, we think."

"That's a good job," replied the Leader fervently. "But I thought you were never coming back. It's half-past six already. Where did you get to?"

Twice M'Kane had to tell the story: once to Osborne and Penarth, and again to Mr Carter and the rest of the crew, "piling on the agony" when they related their benefactor's joke about the terms of payment.

"Anyway, sir," declared Summers, "we might send the doctor a Thanks Badge."

"Yes, sir, we ought to," added M'Kane.

"Proposed by Sea Scout Summers and seconded by Sea Scout M'Kane that a Thanks Badge be sent in due course to Doctor Barbican of Plymouth," announced the Scoutmaster. "All those in favour? Thanks: any against? Carried unanimously!"

At twelve o'clock M'Kane and Webb presented themselves at Dr Barbican's surgery, where they were received by the doctor in person.

Cinders was decidedly on the improve. His body was regaining its natural warmth and although he was not yet actually out of danger, there was more than a fighting chance of his recovery. He was, in fact, able to move his eyes and look up into the faces of his two friends. He even tried to wag his tail, and probably would have succeeded but for the rolls of flannel that enveloped every part of him except his head.

Acting upon the Scoutmaster's suggestion the lads tactfully made no mention of the proposal to bestow a Thanks Badge upon the kindly doctor. Nevertheless their expressions of gratitude were none the less fervent.

"That's all right," declared Dr Barbican. "It's merely a case of one good turn deserves another. Now, when you put in at any port during your homeward cruise, if you wire me immediately upon your arrival I will telegraph back and let you know how Cinders is progressing. Well, good-bye, my lads, and *bon voyage*."

While M'Kane and Webb were away on their visit to the doctor's the rest of the Sea Scouts were busily engaged in preparing for sea, including re-provisioning and watering the ship. Then with a fair wind and favouring tide the "Petrel" glided towards the open waters of the English Channel.

CHAPTER XXIII

PENARTH'S SHOPPING EXPEDITION

It was a most enjoyable run, though devoid of any outstanding incident, and by seven o'clock in the evening the "Petrel" dropped anchor in Dartmouth Harbour, just off the entrance to the wooded Warfleet Cove.

Almost as soon as everything was snugged down, the rain began to fall, descending in such heavy showers that at times it was impossible to see more than a few yards. Under these conditions Mr Carter did not feel inclined to allow the crew on shore; not that they minded the rain but on account of the mud and damp that they would be bound to bring back with them.

Dull? Not a bit of it. What with yarning, playing draughts and dominoes and singing songs the evening passed quite quickly, till, to the accompaniment of the rain pattering upon the cabin-top and the awning, the Sea Scouts retired to rest.

Morning came, but the rain went not. It still continued to pour from an unbroken murky sky. There was not the faintest suspicion of a breeze: the smoke from the houses on shore simply ascended in sluggish columns till dispersed by the torrential downpour.

It was hopeless to put to sea. Being totally dependent upon her sails, the "Petrel" was compelled to wait.

"Shall we make a start this afternoon, sir?" asked Hornsby. "That is, if the weather comes out fine."

"I think not," replied Mr Carter. "You see we have the longest day's run before us: across West Bay to Portland. If we don't make a very early morning start

we may find ourselves in the neighbourhood of Portland Race with darkness coming on, and that is one of the last things we must wish for. No, wet or fine, we'll remain here to-day. You will be all the better for the rest, and I'll warrant you won't be sorry if the sun comes out. It makes all the difference as far as our opinion of Dartmouth is concerned."

"Rain before seven,
Clear up by eleven,"

quoted Penarth. "Do you believe in that, sir?"

"I would rather trust to the barometer and Nature's signals, Penarth," replied Mr Carter. "Now, look lively and go ashore for fresh milk and bread. Be as sharp as you can."

Accordingly Penarth donned his oilskins, and was rowed ashore by Summers, landing on the rocks close to the road from the castle to the town.

It was a good distance to the nearest shop where the provisions he required could be obtained, but the lad came to the conclusion that it was worth the tramp, even in heavy oilskins and in the pouring rain. He could see that Dartmouth, with its curious "butterwalk" and old timbered houses, was quite a decent place in spite of the depressing atmospheric conditions.

Having obtained a quart of fresh milk—which he carried in a closed can—and three loaves in a haversack, Penarth set out on the return journey.

About a hundred yards from the creek the road ran at a considerable height above the harbour, glimpses of which could occasionally be seen through the thick foliage.

Seated by the roadside was a middle-aged woman, rather shabbily dressed, and not very prepossessing in appearance, although she did not look like a beggar.

"Say, young man," she exclaimed as the Sea Scout passed.

Penarth stopped, for by her earnest manner it was apparent that she wanted to ask something.

"Would you mind running down to the water's edge and seeing if my 'usband is all right? He went to see how his fishing-nets were getting on, an' as he's subject to fits I'm getting anxious-like. I'd go myself, only, deary me, I've got the rheumatics very bad."

"I'll look for him," replied Penarth.

"Thank 'ee kindly. If you'll put your parcel and that can down here I'll see no one else meddles with it. I am that anxious, sure I am."

The Sea Scout set the can on the ground and placed the haversack beside it, then, cautiously descending the steep bank, for the rain had made the soil very slippery, he gained the rocks at the water's edge.

There were neither signs of the man nor of the fishing-nets. Thinking that the woman's husband might have made his way along the narrow path and was hidden from view by the intervening rocks, Penarth scrambled along the rough ground for nearly fifty yards. Some one had evidently been that way only a short time before, for there were well-defined footprints in the stiff clay, while here and there the ferns and bracken had been freshly trodden down.

Penarth stood still and listened. Above the patter of the raindrops on the leaves he could hear children's voices.

"Perhaps those kids could give some information," thought the lad. "I'll find out where they are and inquire."

He had not gone very far when he heard a succession of shrieks that told unmistakably that something serious had happened.

Forcing his way through the undergrowth, and more than once slipping on the treacherous rocks, Penarth reached the spot from whence the shouts of terror came.

The reason was soon apparent to the quick-witted Scout.

Four little girls, the eldest not more than ten, had been playing, with the complete indifference of Devonshire children to the rain, close to the edge of the steeply shelving shore. One of them had slipped into the water and was being carried down by the ebb-tide.

Penarth's first impulse was to take a header, but recollecting that the water might be comparatively shallow, since it was nearly low tide, he threw off his oilskin, slid down over the seaweed-covered rocks and dropped feet foremost into the swiftly flowing current.

It was little more than four feet deep, but the tide was sufficient to sweep the Sea Scout off the bottom into deep water.

Half a dozen strokes brought him to within reach of the child, who was being kept afloat by her clothes, which had not yet had time to be completely saturated.

Grasping her by her hair, Penarth brought her to the bank about thirty yards lower down from the place where he had entered the water. The partially uncovered roots of a tree enabled him to climb up the bank on to the lower path, with the child he had rescued, being little the worse for his immersion.

"Got far to go?" he asked of her companions.

"No, sir, only close to the coastguard station."

"Then take her home as fast as you can; she'll be all right," declared Penarth, who could see that the little girl could walk without assistance.

Throwing his oilskin over his shoulder, the Sea Scout made his way back to the road, since he concluded that the lost husband must have gathered up his nets and returned by another path.

When he reached the place where he had met the woman, the latter was not there, and this confirmed his surmise that the man had rejoined her.

THE PARTIALLY UNCOVERED ROOTS OF A TREE ENABLED HIM TO CLIMB UP THE BANK

Picking up the milk-can and haversack, Penarth stepped briskly forward, with the water still streaming from his clothes.

"What's happened to you, Penarth?" asked Summers, as the Second stepped into the dinghy.

"Only pulled a kid out of the water," replied Penarth unconcernedly. "Don't say a word to the others: I'll slip down the fore-hatch and change my things."

Directly the dinghy came alongside the yacht, Penarth got on board. Summers handed him the haversack and milk-can which he placed on the waterways, while his chum made the dinghy fast alongside and afterwards took the provisions below.

Fortunately, according to his ideas, Penarth found the fo'c'sle deserted. The rest of the crew were in the cabin, with the breakfast things on the table, awaiting the caterer's return. Quickly he slipped off his saturated garments, bundled them into a locker until he could find a favourable opportunity to dry them, and getting out through the fore-hatch he went aft and into the cabin by means of the companion-ladder.

"Don't you think this is carrying a joke too far, Penarth?" asked the Scoutmaster sternly.

Penarth hardly knew what to do or say. The question took him completely aback. He was conscious of seven pairs of eyes looking at him intently.

"Now go and get the milk," continued Mr Carter. "Tampering with food is, to say the least of it, a senseless business."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked the bewildered lad. "I brought the milk on board."

"Do you call this milk?" asked Mr Carter, slightly tilting the can and displaying its contents—a quantity of muddy water.

"I don't know how it happened, sir. A woman

asked me to look for her husband, but I shouldn't think she touched it: but, of course, she might have," he added as an afterthought.

"How long were you gone?"

"Ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

"Quite long enough for her to do that. Well, no fresh milk for breakfast. Osborne, open one of those tins of condensed. Now, Penarth, let's have the story."

The lad was half way through his recital when Osborne suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, you're a nice one to get three loaves of bread, Penarth. There's only one in the haversack, and a cabbage and a big stone as well."

"You've been done in the eye, Penarth," said Webb. "Properly, my boy. A Sea Scout caught napping."

"Better luck next time, Penarth," remarked Mr Carter, noting the lad's look of dismay. "We can do fairly well with what we've got. Pass out the biscuit-tin, Reid. One loaf won't go very far."

After all, breakfast was not such a very unsatisfactory meal, and by the time the things were washed and stowed away the rain ceased and the sun shone brilliantly.

"Now for the shore," declared the Scoutmaster. "We'll have a look round the town this morning, and at the same time send off a wire to inquire after Cinders. In the afternoon you can pay a visit to Dartmouth Castle. I think you'll thoroughly enjoy that: I know I did when I saw it some years ago. By the by, one of you must remain on board. I think it's necessary."

"I'll stay," said Penarth. "I've been ashore already."

"Very good," was Mr Carter's response. "I'll remain here while you fellows go to the castle. After tea we'll run into the town again and lay in a stock of provisions. All being well, we'll turn in at eight and make a start for Portland at daybreak."

The whole crew went ashore, Penarth returning with the dinghy to take up his post as ship-keeper.

A short distance along the road, Osborne stopped and pointed to the ground.

"There's Penarth's spoor," he exclaimed. "I know it by the peculiar arrangement of the bars on the soles of his sea-boots. See, this is where he stopped, and there where he went down to the water's edge."

"And here are the woman's footprints," added Reid; indicating the marks of a pair of badly worn shoes that were still discernible in the mud. "There's even the place where Penarth set the can down upon the grass. Suppose we follow the trail and try and find the culprit?"

"Very good," assented the Scoutmaster. "Although it's only for practice. I cannot see what we could do even if we overtake her."

Owing to the drying effects of the sun, the mud was now fairly caked, and the trail, in consequence, comparatively easy to find. Within a distance of twenty yards the spoor led to a stream babbling over the rocks and disappearing in the undergrowth. Here the solution of how the milk went became apparent. It must have been poured into a bottle, for the marks of the oval section of the base, surrounded by traces of milk, told its own tale. The thief had then replenished the can from the stream, and had replaced the lid so that the weight of its contents was about the same as before.

From this point the trail doubled till it reached the by-path that Penarth had taken to the shore; then striking diagonally across the road, it showed that the woman had climbed the bank.

Through the thick undergrowth the Sea Scouts followed in single file. Here and there threads of dark green wool had been hatched in the brambles,

while the footprints still maintained their well-defined shape.

Emerging from the wooded ground the track took a semi-circular direction, still ascending the steep hill-side till it struck the hard road. Here all trace of it was lost, and the only conclusion the trackers could arrive at was that the woman had made her way back to the town.

"Well, this is one way of getting to Dartmouth although it's neither the nearest nor the easiest," remarked M'Kane. "We are up a height! What a jolly decent view!"

Mr Carter inquired for and found the post office, whence a telegraphic message was sent to Dr Barbican to inquire how Cinders was progressing. During the interval of waiting the Sea Scouts made a fairly comprehensive exploration of the town, including the old church and many of the interesting timbered houses that had undergone but little change during the last three hundred years.

Upon their return to the post office the reply awaited them. It read as follows:—"Patient doing well. No cause for anxiety—BARBICAN."

"That's a good thing," ejaculated M'Kane fervently. "Now we will be able to enjoy ourselves all the better. Somehow I couldn't get poor Cinders out of my mind."

"Time we made our way back to the 'Petrel,' lads," announced the Scoutmaster, consulting his watch. "We'll take the lower and direct road this time, and on the way back we'll have a look at the remains of Bayard Castle, which I see shown on this map."

Just as the "Seals" passed under the narrow archway on one side of the ruins, a Scoutmaster accompanied by half a dozen Sea Scouts entered by the other, and the small circular space within the crumbling walls was

literally packed with representatives of the wide-world Movement.

"And what are you fellows doing here?" asked Mr Favershaw, the Scoutmaster, after the customary salutations had been exchanged. "Bound east, eh? When are you sailing?"

"To-morrow at daybreak," replied Mr Carter.

"Then what do you say to a cruise in company? That's our craft—that black yawl lying over on the Kingswear side. She's not much to look at, is she? But she's a rattling good sea-boat, and can move when the weather suits her. We belong to the Thames—Rotherhithe."

"Have you been here long?"

"For nearly a week. This is as far west as we intended to go. We want to get back to the Solent, cruise about there for a fortnight, then return to our headquarters. Where are you lying?"

"Off Warfleet."

"Good. We'll look out for you at daybreak, and have a run together as far as Weymouth. If you care to come on board this evening do so by all means, and bring your fellows with you. We're thirty tons, so there's heaps of room."

Meanwhile the two patrols were exchanging confidences in a most cordial manner, and it was quite an effort for the "Petrel's" crew to "part company." The prospect of a cruise with another Sea Scout yacht appealed to them immensely, while Mr Carter was highly gratified. He had felt slightly anxious at the thought of having to cross the expanse of West Bay with the ill-omened Portland Race at the end of that particular course. Now, with another yacht to bear them company, the misgivings faded away.

As the "Seals" marched past the coastguard station a woman accompanied by a little girl stood on the

pavement, regarding the Sea Scouts with more than ordinary interest.

"I can't see him, mother," said the child disconsolately, "but he was dressed just like them."

"One minute, sir, please——," began the woman.

"Patrol, halt!" ordered Mr Carter; then, saluting, he asked what the woman wanted.

"Sure, I hardly know what to say, sir," she replied. "But this little girl's sister fell into the water this morning. Sure enough I knew she would one of these days, for she's tur'ble venturesome-like. Then one of those Scout lads jumped in and pulled her out; but my little girl says as how it wasn't any of these."

"That's Penarth, then," thought Mr Carter; then:

"What was he like, little girl?"

The child described the rescuer of her sister in a manner that confirmed the Scoutmaster's surmise.

"Yes, he is one of the patrol," he said. "But he is not here; he's on our yacht."

"Sure, I've been as far as Sugary Cove, t' other side of the castle, hoping to find the Scouts' camp," continued the woman. "I'm main glad now, because I want to thank him ever so much. Will he be a'coming ashore again, sir? If so, I'd like to see him."

"I think so," replied Mr Carter. "If you let me know where you live I'll ask him to call."

Upon returning to Warfleet Cove, a signal was made to the "Petrel," and Penarth immediately put off in the dinghy.

"Penarth," exclaimed his Scoutmaster, placing his hand on the lad's shoulder, "you had one adventure this morning with the milk-can, hadn't you? What other did you have?"

CHAPTER XXIV

A MISDIRECTED GIFT

PENARTH'S face flushed as he replied:

"Oh, nothing much, sir. You see, I didn't want to say anything about it. Then you asked me to explain as well as I could how the water got into the milk-can; and in the middle of my explanation Osborne discovered that two of the loaves had been stolen. After that I hadn't an opportunity to say more."

"Anyhow, we've heard all about it, my lad. Another time, don't hide your light under a bushel. It's very different to blowing your own trumpet. There's a medium in all things, and by keeping dark you forget that your comrades fail to profit by your example. Now, when we go ashore after tea you might call at this address: the mother of the girl you rescued wants to thank you personally."

As soon as the dinner things were cleared away and washed up, the Sea Scouts landed, Mr Carter remaining on board to attend to a considerable amount of correspondence which required attention.

The first place the lads visited was the ancient church of St Petrox, that, as far as appearance goes, seemed to be a part of the castle. Then into the famous old fortress, that more than once had been under fire, the Sea Scouts trooped, where they were met and shown round by the genial caretaker.

Up and down the narrow staircases, on to the battlemented roof and down to gloomy apartments sunk into the solid rock, asking innumerable questions of their guide, the lads explored everything with a

thoroughness that showed that they did not want to miss anything.

On returning on board the lads found that Mr Carter had already laid tea. In addition to the usual food there was cream in plenty, plum jam and cake.

"You wonder where these came from?" asked the Scoutmaster, noting the looks of surprise upon the faces of the Sea Scouts. "I may as well say that I haven't left the yacht from the time I returned after putting you ashore till I went to bring you back again."

"Then you've had visitors, sir?" said the Tenderfoot interrogatively.

"That's not a very difficult guess," replied Mr Carter. "Suppose you go further and suggest who the visitors were?"

Several names were hazarded, but to each the Scoutmaster shook his head.

"You'll never guess," he said. "It's from the Honourable Mrs Ffloyd Evans. Who she is I haven't the faintest idea, and the man who brought the things off couldn't or wouldn't give any information. All he said was that he had orders to leave this hamper on board the yacht 'Petrel.' This card was inside."

"Another of our unknown friends, sir," remarked Osborne.

"Yes; and we must acknowledge the gift promptly. I'll write off directly after tea and we can post it as we go into the town. There's enough jam and cake to last us for the rest of the voyage."

After doing full justice to the Honourable Mrs Ffloyd Evans' generous gift, the crew of the "Petrel" made themselves tidy for their visit to their brother Sea Scouts on the yawl "Black Drake," for that was the name of the Rotherhithe craft.

On the way to the landing-stage, close to the boat pond, where the "Black Drake's" cutter was to be

awaiting them, Penarth was detached to pay his duty-call upon the mother of the little girl he had rescued. The lad did not exactly relish the task, but after it was all over he was glad he went.

Meanwhile Mr Carter called at the post office and dispatched a reply-paid telegram to the Meteorological Office asking for a forecast for the morrow's weather. In less than half an hour the answer came:

"Light variable breezes, mostly westerly. Fog in places."

At six o'clock the whole crew—Penarth having rejoined them—proceeded to the agreed place, where the "Black Drake's" boat, manned by the Leader and two strapping Sea Scouts, awaited them.

After Mr Carter was ceremoniously "piped over the ship's side," etiquette was dispensed with, and the "Petrel's" crew were soon fraternising with their chums on the yawl, which seemed a huge craft compared with the "Petrel," although worked entirely by the Sea Scouts without the assistance of "paid hands."

"H'm, light westerly breezes, fog in places," commented Mr Favershaw, when Mr Carter showed him the telegram. "That's good enough, especially as the glass is steady. As for fog we must risk that. If we find any in the neighbourhood of the Bill, we'll steer a course to pass outside the Race and then make for Anvil Point."

"I hope we won't meet with a fog," said Mr Carter, "especially as we will be right in the thick of the Channel traffic. In any case we must try and keep in touch with each other."

"My experience is that fogs in this part do not last very long, especially in the summer months," remarked the skipper of the "Black Drake." "We were in one for a couple of hours half-way across West Bay on our way westward, but it cleared long before we sighted

land. It's not pleasant, I admit, groping your way and unable to see the end of the bowsprit; but it's not nearly so bad as on the Thames, with tramp steamers passing a few yards away every few minutes."

Up for'ard the Sea Scouts were enjoying themselves immensely, "cock-fighting" affording no end of amusement. The competitors, hobbled at the ankles and wrists and compelled to assume a crouching posture by grasping a short length of broom handle behind the knees, had to hop and charge each other. As often as not both combatants would roll over on to the deck, amid the laughter of the spectators.

Another game the "Black Drake's" crew introduced to their guests was "slinging the monkey," one lad being hauled up by means of a bowline from the cross-trees till his feet were clear of the deck. He was armed with a "colt," or knotted rope's-end, while the rest of the players had to try to put a chalk-mark on his back without receiving a smart blow from the "colt." It was exciting sport, the possibility of getting a stinging rap from the rope's-end acting as a powerful incentive to agility.

Thus the allotted hour sped quickly, for both crews had to turn in by eight o'clock in order to be ready for the long cruise on the morrow.

With the first blush of dawn the "Petrel's" crew turned out, had breakfast, and prepared to get under way. It was an ideal morning, grey and calm, with a faint ripple on the waters of the Dart that betokened more breeze outside. There was a chilliness in the air that, combined with the dew on the decks, made the crew bestir themselves in order to get warm.

"'Black Drake's' hoisting sail, sir," reported Osborne.

"Look alive, lads!" ordered the Scoutmaster. "We mustn't let them overhaul us. Cast off the main halliards there!"

Almost neck and neck the "Petrel" and the "Black Drake" slipped between the grey old castles of Dartmouth and Kingswear that guarded the landlocked estuary; then heeling to the freshening breeze they shaped a course to clear the jagged rocks of the Mewstone.

"Fine morning," sung out Mr Favershaw, pointing to the sun as it rose above a bank of grey mist. "If the breeze holds we'll do it in ten hours. Both boats are of about the same turn of speed."

"Unless you set a topsail," shouted Mr Carter, in reply.

"No fear of that," replied the other. "I don't believe in a lot of top-hamper to screw an extra half knot out of the old boat. By the by, did you have a visit from the other 'Petrel' last night?"

"What other 'Petrel'?" asked the Scoutmaster of the ketch.

"Didn't you know? There was one lying just ahead of us. They were expecting a box of provisions, and it hadn't turned up."

"By Jove! Then the fellow made a mistake and sent the things aboard here by mistake."

Mr Favershaw laughed.

"I told them that," he said, "and they didn't seem to worry about it. I thought, perhaps, that later on they might change their minds and inquire. Anyhow, it's too late to turn back now, and the provisions won't keep."

"We'll send back what's left directly we reach Weymouth," declared Mr Carter. "But I'm afraid eight of us have made a hole in them."

"What's that inland on the port bow, sir?" asked Reid, pointing to an isolated mass of rock rising to a height of over a hundred feet in a series of sharp points.

"That's the Dartmouth Mewstone," replied Mr Carter.

"You remember we saw a Mewstone in Plymouth Sound and another close to Bolt Head."

"Funny sort of a place for anybody to live," remarked the lad.

"But I don't think anybody does live there."

"But there's a fire on it. And look, sir, there's a man sitting down and waving to us."

At that same moment the crew of the "Black Drake" noticed the signal, and called out to the "Petrel":

"There's some one in distress on the Mewstone."

"All right," replied Mr Carter. "We'll send our boat, since yours is stowed on deck. Will you heave-to and wait?"

"Ay, ay."

"Away dinghy's crew," ordered Mr Carter. "Take plenty of rope with you, for it looks like a ticklish job."

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAN ON THE MEWSTONE

M'KANE and Hornsby manned the dinghy's oars, while Osborne took charge, and with a final caution from their Scoutmaster to work to leeward of the rocks the boat's crew pushed off.

Directly the castaway saw the dinghy approaching him he pointed significantly to his foot and then to the south-east side of the rock.

"He's broken his leg or something of the sort," said Osborne, "and he also wants to show us the best place to land. Easy now, there's a good deal of surf breaking on this side."

Keeping as close to the towering rock as prudence dictated the Leader steered till the dinghy rounded the point which the man had indicated. On the other side, sheltered by a small natural breakwater, was a kind of terrace which afforded a comparatively easy landing. It was not only to leeward but out of the run of the tide.

"Back her in a bit nearer while I heave this coil of rope ashore," ordered the Leader. "That's right. Now, M'Kane, take both oars and keep her off after Hornsby and I have jumped. Be careful, old man. It looks slippery."

Hornsby, awaiting a favourable moment when the boat's gunwale was almost level with the ledge, leapt ashore, instantly sliding over the kelp and subsiding heavily.

"Hurt?" asked Osborne anxiously.

"Not a bit of it," replied the lad, rising cautiously to

his feet. "Here, let me hack some of this seaweed away before you try it."

A few blows with his axe cleared a space upon the ledge, and without mishap the Leader rejoined his comrade.

Slinging the coil of rope over his shoulders Osborne began to climb, Hornsby following at a respectful distance. The ascent was easier than it appeared to be when viewed from the sea, but none the less Osborne could not help wondering how they could get an injured man down into the boat.

After a strenuous climb both lads reached the sloping ledge, whence they could see both the "Petrel" and the "Black Drake" hove-to at less than a couple of hundred yards away. A ringing cheer from both yachts greeted their appearance, and thus encouraged the Sea Scouts resumed their progress in search of the castaway.

It was now far from an easy matter, for although the rocks were dry and sun-baked, they were extremely irregular and traversed at frequent intervals by deep, narrow fissures. One slip and the result would be fatal, for the cliff descended almost vertically for quite fifty feet.

Guided by the thin column of smoke, the two lads maintained their progress, till they were rewarded by the sight of the man they had come to rescue.

"Glad you've come, mates," he exclaimed cheerfully.

"What's wrong?" asked Osborne, somewhat suspicious at being addressed in such a light-hearted tone.

"Only my foot. I fell and twisted it."

"Broken?"

"No, only a sprain, but 'tain't much good to try and get down by myself. 'Sides, my boat broke adrift when the tide rose. I watched her making tracks for Mansands."

"Have you been here long?"

"Since seven o'clock last evening."

"All right; we'll soon get you down," said Osborne cheerfully. "No, don't attempt to take off your boot. Now rest on my shoulder. Hornsby, pass that line round his waist, and keep well behind us. Does it hurt?"

"Not much," replied the man, although he involuntarily winced with the pain. "Just you steady me a bit. I guess I'll skip down all right."

It was a risky business descending the jagged pile of rocks. Fortunate it was that both Sea Scouts were fairly accustomed to working aloft, otherwise the height might have made them giddy.

Slowly yet surely they retraced their steps, carefully helping the stranger over the more difficult gaps, till they arrived at the steep slippery part above the rocky ledge on which they landed.

"Don't worry about me," said the man. "Take a turn round that rock and lower me. A few extra pains won't make much difference, 'specially if I keep my ankle clear of everything."

"I can see no other way," agreed the Leader, helping the injured man to sit down on the edge of the declivity and then standing up with the rope.

"Here goes then," exclaimed the man stoically, and without hesitation he allowed himself to slip.

Thanks to the friction afforded by the rounded rock, the rope was paid out with little difficulty, till the release of the tension showed that the stranger had reached the lowermost ledge.

"Looks a bit tricky," remarked Hornsby, cautiously peering over the edge. "If one of us should slip, it would be awkward both for us and that chap."

"But we jolly well mustn't slip," added Osborne. "I'll go first and then I can tell you where the footholds are. Don't look down any more whatever you do."

So saying, the Leader threw himself on the flat surface of the rock, and feeling with his foot tried to find a niche.

"I can't find a foothold," he declared at length. "Hold on to my hand a minute. It may be a few inches lower down."

Again Osborne prodded the rock with his toes, but all to no purpose.

"There's a ledge about eight inches lower down," shouted M'Kane from the boat.

Probably for the first time Osborne realised that climbing up a rock was a far easier matter than climbing down. Already the strain on his ribs was beginning to tell and there was a numbing sensation in his legs.

"Give me a hand up, old chap," he exclaimed breathlessly. "I must have a rest before I have another shot at it."

"I'll try," volunteered Hornsby.

"No," said the Leader peremptorily. "It's my job, besides I am longer in the leg than you are."

"Doesn't sound very cheerful for me," declared Hornsby.

"I'll tell you what, I'll hold on to the rope and you can go down hand over hand," said Osborne. "Wonder we didn't think about that before."

"How about you?"

"I'll get down somehow."

"Why not make the rope fast and climb down too?"

"Pity to have to lose a good piece of rope," remarked Osborne, with a true seaman's reluctance to part with a trusty length of line. "No, I'll cast it off as soon as you are down, and trust to luck."

"No need," said Hornsby. "Take both parts in your hands: the rope's long enough. Then, when we're both down we can unreeve the whole length of it."

"When we get aboard again, old chap, will you do me a favour?" asked Osborne, with mock sincerity.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Kick me three times for being a silly ass. I ought to have thought of that. Now, down you go: I'll be with you in a brace of shakes."

In less than a minute both lads were safely on the lowermost ledge, with the rope neatly coiled ready to be tossed into the dinghy.

But yet another difficulty confronted them. It was by no means a simple matter for them to take a flying leap into the boat, but how was the injured man to perform the feat?

"Don't you worry about me, you chaps," said the rescued man. "You get aboard and stand by to pick me up. Leg or no leg I'll throw myself into the water."

"Can you swim?"

"Ne'er a stroke, mate; but 'tain't of any consequence. Pass that rope round my waist, an' I guess you can haul me aboard."

"That's the only way, as far as I can see," said Osborne, and having made an end of the rope fast round the man's waist, he sprang lightly into the dinghy, taking the rest of the coil with him.

Carefully watching his opportunity Hornsby followed, and took one of the oars.

Three boats' lengths from the rock the rowers rested on their oars to await orders.

"All ready there," asked the Leader.

"Ay, ay," answered the man resolutely.

"Then give way, lads!"

Hornsby and M'Kane bent their backs to the oars, and as the line became taut the fellow jumped into the water making a tremendous splash. But before he had time to sink Osborne took up the slack of the line and quickly pulled him to the stern of the dinghy.

"Keep well for'ard," cautioned the Leader to his crew, "or the extra weight aft will swamp the boat."

Then with a heave Osborne assisted the rescued man to clamber over the transom, a task that brought more than one involuntary groan from the latter in spite of his fortitude.

"Give way," ordered Osborne.

As the dinghy rounded the projecting part of the Mewstone that had hitherto screened her from the "Petrel" and her consort, another round of cheering burst from the Sea Scouts who had been beginning to feel anxious at the prolonged absence of the boat. In fact, Scoutmaster Favershaw was just on the point of ordering out the cutter when the Petrel's dinghy hove in sight.

"Bring him aboard here," he shouted. "We've more room than you have."

To this Mr Carter waved his assent, and Osborne understanding the signal steered the dinghy to the side of the "Black Drake."

It was even then a matter of considerable difficulty to get the injured man on board, for there was a good deal of swell on the south-western side of the Mewstone, but by the aid of a bowline he was lifted safely and with little pain up to the yawl's deck.

Having done their part of the business the "Petrel's" dinghy returned to the parent ship, where Osborne made a report of what had occurred.

The sails of both yachts were filling now, as they sailed at less than twenty yards apart.

"What are you going to do with the man?" asked Mr Carter.

"He wanted us to put back to Dartmouth," replied Mr Favershaw, "but we told him it would be too long a business against the tide; so we agreed to steer towards Berry Head and tranship him to one of the Brixham

THE FELLOW JUMPED INTO THE WATER, MAKING A TREMENDOUS SPLASH

trawlers. He says that will suit him all right, as he has relatives living at Brixham."

"Right; we'll follow you; it's not much out of our course," said the skipper of the "Petrel."

At the same time he looked anxiously at the cabin clock. It was now a quarter to eight. Less than twelve hours remained to do fifty miles, and that with a light wind, before darkness set in.

Off Berry Head the yachts fell in with several of the Brixham fishing fleet, and the first boat hailed readily consented to receive the patient.

With many expressions of thanks, and a good-natured smile on his face the whole time, the rescued man was placed on board the smack.

"Wouldn't it be advisable to make for Torquay?" shouted Mr Carter. "The wind's falling very light."

"It will hold, I think," replied the "Black Drake's" skipper. "I vote we carry on. With luck we'll sight Portland Bill by four o'clock."

"Very well, then," agreed Mr Carter. "What's the course?"

"East by south: that will serve till we sight land."

"East by south it is," repeated Mr Carter, then turning to the crew he added, "It's good-bye to Devonshire now, lads. All being well we'll anchor this evening in Dorset waters."

CHAPTER XXVI

ACROSS WEST BAY

It was not until noon that the Devon heights disappeared from view in the light haze, and the prospect of making a speedy passage seemed to be unlikely to be fulfilled. Under Mr Carter's directions, the crew of the "Petrel" were divided into two watches, one under Osborne's orders and the other under Penarth's. The members of the latter were ordered down below to take what rest they could, so that in the event of having to make a night of it, they would be fairly fresh.

"How about you, sir?" asked Osborne with typical consideration.

"Oh, I'll stick it somehow," replied the Scoutmaster briskly. "Perhaps I may have a nap after lunch."

Both yachts were moving quickly through the water, sailing free on the starboard tack, for the wind had backed to the south'ard. In speed there was little or nothing to choose between them, for the greater spread of canvas of the "Black Drake" was counterbalanced by the finer lines of the "Petrel."

At intervals the lads amused themselves by exchanging signals, and occasionally singing Sea Scouts' choruses; while to vary the proceedings, mackerel lines were trailed astern of both yachts with considerable success, judging by the shouts of excitement when each silvery coated fish was secured.

After dinner Mr Carter went below, leaving Osborne in charge with instructions to awake him should there be a shift of wind or any indications of fog.

It was quite a new experience, as far as the Sea Scouts of the "Petrel" were concerned, steering solely by compass and entirely out of sight of land. With the exception of the "Black Drake," no other sail was in sight; the horizon, as far as the slight mist permitted, was unbroken.

About two o'clock the wind dropped, and in consequence the lighter-draughted "Petrel" began to draw away from her consort. To check her speed Osborne ordered the watch on deck to shift jibs, substituting No. 2 for the larger one. It was certainly a somewhat unusual course to shorten sail in a falling wind, but under the circumstances Osborne could think of no other plan.

Less and less grew the strength of the wind till the yachts began to roll in the long heavy swell, their canvas flapping as the booms swung from side to side. An hour later the skipper of the "Black Drake" called out that the log had registered only two miles since two o'clock, or an average of one knot.

Presently Osborne's keen eye discerned the dreaded sea-fog swooping down. It seemed to bank up from all quarters at once, eddying in white wreaths of vapour and drifting with considerable rapidity over the oily surface of the sea.

Acting upon his instructions, Osborne sent Webb below to inform his Scoutmaster of the approaching fog; and without delay Mr Carter came on deck.

So swiftly did the fog gather that in a few minutes the sails of the "Black Drake" were lost to view; only the black hull could be discerned between the drifting rolls of semi-transparent moisture.

"On with your oilskins, lads," ordered the Scoutmaster briskly, "or you'll get wet to the skin in a very few minutes. Webb, you take charge of the fog-horn, and give three blasts every minute or so.

That indicates we are sailing with the wind abaft the beam."

Up came the Tenderfoot with the fog-horn, a cumbersome pair of bellows with a trumpet in place of the ordinary nozzle.

Barely had the echoes of the three hoots died away when a similar signal came from the "Black Drake," now wholly invisible.

Within a very short space of time the fog was so thick that from the well the "Petrel's" deck seemed to terminate at the mainmast. Beyond that bowsprit and headsails were swallowed up in the impenetrable wall of white mist.

Instinctively the lads became silent. Their surroundings seemed to exercise an awe-inspiring effect upon them. It was weird sailing slowly, blindly and almost unconsciously through the fog with nothing but the little needle of the compass to trust to. It was not that they were afraid; they hardly realised the danger. It was rather the sublime novelty of the situation that kept them spell-bound.

"Hark! What is that?" exclaimed Summers, holding up one finger to enjoin attention.

A long-drawn drone seemed to pierce the veil of mist. Louder and louder grew the sound till it appeared to come from immediately overhead.

"An aeroplane," declared Osborne.

"That's what it is," added Mr Carter. "In all probability the airman is speeding on his way well above this bank of fog through which we are groping blindly."

"Then he must be at a great height, sir?"

"Not necessarily. Fog often hangs low. It is no uncommon thing for the mast-head man of one ship to see the topmasts and t'gallants of another, while on deck one could not see his hand a few inches from his

face. But what have we been up to? I fancy that last blast from the 'Black Drake' seemed farther away. Look, Osborne, you're three points off your course."

"Sorry, sir; I must have been thinking about that aeroplane," said Osborne, thrusting the helm up till the former course was resumed.

When the next fog-signal came from the yawl the faintness of the sound left no doubt that the distance between the two yachts was rapidly increasing. To add to the trouble there was a complete difference of opinion as to the direction whence it came, Osborne maintaining that the sound was dead aft, Summers declaring that it was on the port quarter, while the Tenderfoot remarked that it came from the starboard hand. Between these three opinions Mr Carter was completely at a loss.

"Haul your staysail to windward, Summers," he ordered. "That will give her a chance to pick us up, if we've outsailed her. Keep that fog-horn going, Webb, with a long pause between every three blasts. Now, listen."

Like a mournful wail came the faint sound of the "Blake Drake's" horn, and again there were differences of opinion as to the direction.

"I believe she's ahead of us," declared Mr Carter. "It's quite possible she picked up a draught of air and that carried her past our lee. Now, listen again."

"There she goes," exclaimed Summers.

"I didn't hear it," said Osborne.

"Nor I," added Mr Carter.

"I believe I did," said the Tenderfoot.

Between these varied opinions as to direction and sound there could be no result. Reluctantly the crew of the "Petrel" had to come to the conclusion that the "Black Drake" had parted company.

"Make a note of it in the log, Osborne," said the

Scoutmaster quietly. "Four fifty-five: lost all sound signals from the 'Black Drake.' Now, lads, keep on the alert. We must listen for the fog-horns and syrens of passing vessels, and also for the fog-signal from the Shambles Lightship."

As the hours sped on the hope that the fog would lift seemed as far from realisation as ever. Indeed the gloom seemed to increase, till in the cabin it was necessary to light up in order to prepare tea.

At six o'clock the watch below turned out, and all hands, with the exception of the Scoutmaster and Leader, set-to on the appetising repast that Summers and Webb had prepared.

Mr Carter ate his at the helm, while Osborne crouched under the lee of the cabin-top. In spite of the unpleasant fact that the moisture dropped from the brim of their sou'westers into the tea, the hot beverage was none the less comforting.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Mr Carter. "That's the Shambles. Now, listen!"

A minute later came the faint sound of the lightship's syren again: a high pitched wail followed at six seconds' interval by a deep muffled blare.

"On the port bow, sir," declared Osborne

"I hope so, too," added the Scoutmaster. "But one cannot be sure of the locality of sounds in a fog, such a lot depends upon the powers of suggestion. When we have an opportunity, Osborne, I will prove to you by a very simple experiment that you cannot believe your own ears. Afterwards you can try the trick upon every one of the patrol, and I'll warrant they'll all be deceived. See if those fellows have finished their tea; if they have, turn Penarth and the second watch on deck. It's about time you stood easy."

At half-past seven the conditions of things were much the same. The sound of the Shambles fog-syren did

not seem to grow louder. In fact several times the high note only was audible, while for five minutes no sound at all was heard from the warning lightship. This, Mr Carter knew, was due to certain peculiarities of the atmosphere in foggy weather, when "sound-proof zones" completely neutralise the blast of the syren.

The Scoutmaster happened to be down below when Penarth called out to him that there was a strange rumbling sound at no distance off and momentarily growing louder and louder.

In a trice Mr Carter was on deck.

He knew that the danger he had hoped to guard against was confronting the yacht. Caught by the six-knot tide she was being swept straight upon the dreaded Portland Race.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DREADED RACE

"LADS!" said the Scoutmaster calmly. "All of you except Penarth get down below. We're in for a bit of a tumble, but it won't last long. Close the skylight, secure the forehatch on the inside and shut the companion. No boy is to leave the cabin till I give the word."

Without hesitation the Sea Scouts obeyed, and Mr Carter, who had minimised the danger without committing himself, turned to the Second.

"Pass the bight of a rope round your waist," he ordered, "then bend this warp to the dinghy's painter and pay it all out."

Penarth did as he was told, though he wondered why the dinghy should be given such a scope of rope.

"Now," continued Mr Carter, raising his voice, for the roar of the turbulent water was rapidly growing tremendous, "hang on like grim death. We are in for a rough time, I feel certain, but you mustn't mind a tidy drop of water coming on board."

"Ay, ay, sir," shouted Penarth in reply.

The Scoutmaster braced his feet against the mizzen mast and grasped the tiller with both hands. Although the "Petrel" carried very little way, for the wind was light, she was being borne towards the as yet invisible cauldron of water at the speed of a trotting horse. The hitherto long rolling motion of the ketch gave place to a succession of jerks as if the keel were gripped by a titanic hand.

Penarth glanced at Mr Carter. The Scoutmaster's

face was calm. He was whistling; but his outward appearance belied the state of his feelings. He wished that the yacht were well out of that dangerous locality, but since she had to go through the Race he determined to put a bold face on the matter, if only for the sake of his youthful comrades.

Suddenly the "Petrel's" bows were flung upwards, till she seemed literally to stand on end. Only by gripping the coaming was Penarth saved from being thrown across the cockpit. Simultaneously the rudder, battered by a mass of white foam, was thrown hard over, the tiller being wrenched from the helmsman's grasp. The next instant a smother of broken water poured over the port quarter, filling the watertight cockpit up to the level of the occupants' waists.

For the moment the Scoutmaster thought the "Petrel" was making her last plunge. Everything around him was white: a blur of foam and fog.

With a crash the main and mizzen booms took charge and swept with terrific force from port to starboard, the mainsheet block missing Mr Carter's head by the fraction of an inch.

Down plunged the yacht's bows till there was water a foot deep as far aft as the mainmast. The coils of rope were thrown in all directions, while one of the sweeps, in spite of its being lashed down, was wrenched from the deck and carried overboard. On either side threatening waves reared themselves to such a height that, distorted by the fog, they appeared to overtop the masts. And all the while a deafening roar that was enough to appal the heart of the stoutest mariner.

With the next swing of the tiller the Scoutmaster grasped the frail-like bar of iron. It shook him like a terrier does a rat, till he slipped the strop of the relieving tackle over the head of the tiller and reduced it to a state of sullen submission.

Before the tubes of the watertight cockpit could discharge the water that had poured inboard, another tremendous cataract poured over the yacht. It swept the water-beaker from its stand and threw it like a cork against the opposite side of the cockpit, with a crash that threatened to stove in the teak, lead-lined panel.

"Overboard with it," shouted the Scoutmaster.

Penarth could not hear the words, but he understood the accompanying gesture. With a heave he threw the dangerous gear into the raging sea, following up the action by slipping on the grating and subsiding up to his neck in the water in the cockpit.

Then, like a toboggan on a steep slide, the dinghy tore past the labouring yacht. Caught on the crest of a wave it narrowly missed being dashed against the "Petrel's" side, and was lost in the chaos of mist and foam. Five seconds later it came back, this time to starboard, till a savage jerk on the painter told the Scoutmaster that it was now nearly a hundred feet astern.

The sails were no longer drawing. The yacht was turning erratically to all points of the compass, but momentarily being urged onwards at the rate of nearly ten miles an hour.

With a crash that shook the "Petrel" from keel to truck another heavy sea poured over the bows. In a solid mass it poured aft, right over the cabin-top and into the well. Only by promptly ducking behind the stout teak bulkhead was Penarth saved from being hurled aft and perhaps overboard in spite of the lifeline; while Mr Carter was obliged to throw his arm round the mizzen-mast and hang on like grim death.

It seemed as if the yacht would never shake herself clear. Her deck appeared more than awash: it was more like being totally submerged, but after an interval

that seemed interminable she bobbed up like a cork, with the water pouring from her as it does from a submarine when ascending to the surface.

Assailed and battered on all sides the staunch, hard-pressed yacht literally fought her way through the turmoil, till, almost as suddenly as she had entered it, she passed out of the dreaded Race into a stretch of comparatively calm water, though agitated by the undulations from that area of chaos.

"Open the hatch and turn those fellows out, Penarth," said Mr Carter; then, "Why, my lad, what's the matter?"

For the Second had slipped upon the floor and was nursing his leg.

"It pains awfully, sir; I must have knocked it somewhere."

"Can't you stand?"

"I'll see, sir."

Making a determined effort, Penarth sat upon the seat, but to stand was beyond him.

Leaving the tiller for a minute, Mr Carter pushed back the hatch.

"Turn out, lads," he said. "It's all over now. Penarth's hurt his leg; so if one of you will take the helm I'll lift him down below."

Six very pale Sea Scouts came on deck, their faces pale with the nerve-racking experience they had undergone. Those who had been asleep had been rudely thrown out of their bunks, while every one of them had been tossed about in the heaving, stifling cabin like peas in a rattle.

Lifting the injured Sea Scout in his arms, Mr Carter backed down the ladder into the cabin and placed Penarth on one of the bunks. This done, he carefully removed the lad's saturated shoe and stocking. It was a painful business, for the stocking had stuck

to the flesh, which from ankle to knee was literally raw.

"Osborne," said he to the Leader, who, with Summers and Webb came below to bear a hand, "just attend to Penarth's injuries, then strip off his wet clothes. I'll change and go on deck as soon as possible."

"How did you get wet through, Penarth?" asked the Leader, in the midst of his first-aid operations. "You both had oilskins on."

"Guess you'd be pretty wet, oilskins or no oilskins," replied Penarth, "if you were in the seas that tumbled into the cockpit. More than that, I doubted whether she'd keep afloat."

"Anyhow, I would rather have been outside than cooped up down here," rejoined Webb. "We knew something serious was happening, but we wouldn't get out and see, since we were ordered not to. It was a strong temptation to rush up from down below, though."

"Lucky for all of us that you didn't," remarked Mr Carter, who, while changing in the fo'c'sle, had overheard the conversation. "If you had, ten to one a few tons of water would have found their way below, and the result would have been fatal to the lot of us."

"Will you come on deck, sir?" shouted M'Kane.

"What's wrong now?" asked the Scoutmaster, complying with the request with alacrity.

"Up aloft, sir," replied M'Kane. "The mainsail torn I think, but it's too foggy to see properly. Hear that, sir?"

A peculiar sound, like wood grinding against wood, confirmed M'Kane's suspicions. Something had carried away aloft.

"I'll go aloft, sir," volunteered Reid.

"No necessity," objected the Scoutmaster. "You and I, Reid, will get the mainsail down and see

what's wrong. Keep her steady on her course M'Kane. We're all right now. The Shambles Lightship is well on our port quarter."

It was a lengthy task coiling away the ropes that were trailing overboard, but this had to be done before the mainsail could be lowered. When, at last, the huge spread of canvas was dropped the nature of the damage became apparent.

The parrel, or rope that holds the jaws of the gaff round the mast, had parted, while the undue friction had nearly worn away the luff rope. In a very little while longer the rope would assuredly have parted, with the result that the mainsail would have been badly rent.

"Get a sailmaker's needle and twine from the bosun's locker, Reid," said Mr Carter, "and don't forget the 'palm.' I'll get a short length of rope. It's lucky M'Kane noticed that something was amiss. With luck we ought to effect repairs while daylight lasts—such as it is."

Opening his knife the Scoutmaster made good use of it, cutting the rope away from the sail for a distance of quite three feet on either side of the frayed portion. Then by means of two long splices he joined up the severed portions of the luff-rope.

"How's that, Reid?" he asked.

"Capital, sir," replied the Sea Scout. "That ought to hold."

"I trust that it will," added Mr Carter. "It will be awkward for us if it does not. Now, cut me off a couple of yards of seaming twine and wax it well."

Placing the sailmaker's palm on his hand to prevent the needle penetrating the flesh, Mr Carter began to sew the sail and the rope, Reid watching him critically the while.

"That's done, thank goodness," he exclaimed at last

"Now, Reid, stand by with the parrel line. I think there are some spare beads down below: I'll look."

Soon he reappeared with half a dozen circular pieces of boxwood, each pierced by a hole. These he threaded through a short length of rope, securing the latter to the jaws of the gaff on the fore side of the mast.

"Now, we're ready," he continued cheerfully. "Haul away, Reid."

Up went the mainsail, now as sound as ever it was, till the gaff and upper portion of the canvas vanished into the mist.

"Now, lads, get below. Tell the watch on duty to stand by ready to be called if necessary. I'll take the helm, so heigh-ho for a night in the English Channel."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DERELICT STEAM-YACHT

LEFT to himself, the Scoutmaster prepared for his long and lonely vigil. In a way he was not sorry, for he was able to commune with his own thoughts. He was grateful to his Maker who had preserved him and those in his charge from the perils of the deep, and in the silence of the night he fervently returned thanks, for Mr Carter was not one of those who in times of danger call despairingly upon God for aid, and when the peril is past congratulate themselves upon their escape, and straightway put all thoughts of gratitude to Providence out of their minds.

The Scoutmaster's plan was to shape a course almost parallel to the Dorset coast, allowing for the indraught into the bays and harbours that mariners are particularly cautioned against when navigating between Portland and Selsea Bill in thick weather. Already the fog had lasted longer than is usual in summer, and it could be reasonably expected that in a few hours the weather would clear sufficiently for the powerful light on Anvil Point to be picked up.

Fainter and fainter grew the syren on the Shambles Lightship, as borne eastwards by wind and tide the "Petrel" steadily reeled off the miles that lay betwixt her and home, the Scoutmaster using the fog-horn at the proper intervals with unflagging energy.

At two in the morning the Scoutmaster's ear caught the subdued sound of a detonating rocket. Pulling

out his watch he held it to the gleam of the binnacle light, glancing at it occasionally till five minutes had passed. Then came another report.

"Good," ejaculated the helmsman. "That's Anvil Point. We must be somewhere outside the limits of St Alban's Race, which is a lot to be thankful for. No more races for me, if I can help it."

Two hours later the fog seemed to grow lighter. Day was approaching.

"Below, there!" ordered the Scoutmaster. "Turn out the second watch! Ah! It's pleasant to see you again, Osborne. Will you take the tiller? I'll get below and have something to eat and drink."

The Leader peered into his Scoutmaster's face. Beyond looking rather tired, Mr Carter showed no signs of his strenuous trick at the helm.

"Don't hurry, sir," said Osborne. "I know the course. I'd get some sleep, if I were you. We'll call you up if there's any good cause."

"A cup of hot coffee will work wonders, Osborne," replied the Scoutmaster. "I don't mean to turn in till we are safe at anchor in some sheltered harbour. All the same, I'll take your advice and not hurry."

But Mr Carter's resolution was not equal to compel the forces of nature, for almost as soon as he had drank his coffee he felt his head drooping on his chest. Three or four times he roused himself, till, worn out with twenty-four hours' ceaseless strain, he fell sound asleep.

Unknown to him, two of the Sea Scouts gently lifted his feet on to the bunk and placed a pillow under his head; then silently the "watch below" donned their oilskins and joined their comrades on deck, leaving Mr Carter and Penarth in undisturbed possession of the cabin.

As the light increased the wind fell, while the fog showed no signs of decreasing in density.

Presently Webb touched Osborne on the shoulder.

"What's happened to the dinghy?" he asked. "The painter isn't made fast."

"Neither is it," said the Leader. "It must have broken adrift when we went through the Race."

"Hold on," exclaimed the Tenderfoot. "What's this rope? It's trailing in the water."

"Haul away, there," ordered Osborne. "Is there any strain on it?"

"A little," replied Webb, gathering in the slack and coiling away in his best professional manner.

In less than half a minute he exclaimed:

"Why, there's the dinghy's painter, bent on to the rope. I wonder what that was for?"

No one on deck knew, for owing to Penarth's injuries the fact that the dinghy had been given a long scope of rope was unknown to the others, while curiously enough the fact had quite slipped Mr Carter's recollection.

When the boat was brought close alongside, the severity of her passage through the Race became apparent. The water was well over the bottom-boards, while both oars had been jerked out of her by the furious seas.

The Tenderfoot instantly jumped into the dinghy to bale her out, while M'Kane, remembering that there was a spare pair of oars in the fo'c'sle, cautiously stole below and unlashed them from the slings.

"There's no knowing when we might want the boat in a hurry," remarked Osborne. "That's right. Pass a lashing over them: they won't come adrift very easily."

"All correct," reported the Tenderfoot, having accomplished his task.

"Then come aboard and let her drop astern. I do believe the fog's getting lighter. We can see the bowsprit end."

"Jolly good job too," declared M'Kane. "I almost forget what the land looks like."

Yes, the fog was lifting. In a very few minutes the ruffled surface of the sea was visible for nearly a hundred yards around the yacht.

"What's that ahead?" asked Summers. "Is it land?"

The Sea Scouts peered through the mist, striving to discern the object Summers had pointed out.

Almost in a line with the direction of the bowsprit a weird shape, strangely distorted by the fog, lay athwart the "Petrel's" course, and before Osborne could alter helm, a swirl of the bank of mist revealed the nature of the danger.

It was a steam-yacht of about a hundred feet in length, with three raking masts and one funnel. Her davits were without boats, while the trailing "falls," or lowering gear, told its own tale. For some reason or the other the vessel was abandoned.

"Turn out Mr Carter," ordered the Leader, reluctantly obliged to admit that the necessity to disturb the Scoutmaster's rest was pressing.

Mr Carter was not long in making his appearance, but meanwhile Osborne had put the helm hard down and had flattened the headsails to windward. The "Petrel," hove-to, was practically stationary within fifty yards of the deserted yacht.

"She's sinking, by Jove!" exclaimed the Scoutmaster. "See, her scuttles are almost level with the water. Keep way on the yacht, Osborne; it might be

awkward for us if she suddenly plunges. There'll be a fair amount of suction."

Moving slowly through the water, for the wind still continued light, the "Petrel" passed fairly close to the steam-yacht's stern, which bore the name "Mayblossom" in gilt letters. On the starboard side coming into view, the cause of the disaster became apparent. From her rail to below her present water-line, and slightly abaft the funnel, was a vertical rent, so wide that it seemed wonderful that the vessel had not sunk within a few moments of the impact. As it was, she was floating on an even keel, with a slight list to starboard.

"Perhaps she's aground," suggested M'Kane.

"Impossible," rejoined Mr Carter. "Prove it for yourself, M'Kane: there's the lead-line."

The Sea Scout made a sounding, and reported "By the mark seven"—or a depth of forty-two feet.

"Then she's not aground," admitted the lad. "I don't suppose she draws more than ten feet. Yet she doesn't seem to be sinking any lower. Something must be keeping her up."

"Can we board her, sir?" asked Osborne.

"Wait a little longer in any case: it would be very awkward if not fatal to anyone on board if she suddenly made a plunge."

"The wind's backing to sou'east, sir," announced Osborne. "That ought to dispel fog. Then we can see where we are. Perhaps——"

"Perhaps what, Osborne?"

"We might get this vessel into harbour, sir."

"H'm. It would be dangerous to make sail on her, even if there's canvas on board. No, that won't do. We might, however, take possession of her and signal to the nearest coastguard station and

ask them to wire for a tug. But don't be in a hurry. We must make sure that she's not getting lower in the water before we attempt anything in that direction."

A quarter of an hour went by; then the Scoutmaster electrified his crew by ordering, "Man the dinghy, lads! M'Kane, Summers and Webb will accompany me. Osborne, take charge of the 'Petrel,' and keep her under way within hailing distance. If the fog comes on again, send the boat instantly."

The three Sea Scouts and the Scoutmaster took their places in the dinghy, Hornsby accompanying them so as to be able to row the boat back to the "Petrel." The "prize crew" had taken the precaution to don cork lifebelts.

So low was the yacht in the water that the Sea Scouts were able to gain her deck without much difficulty. The Scoutmaster, having dismissed the dinghy, made his way to the engine-room hatchway. The engine and boiler rooms were filled with water, but the funnel was warm, showing that the catastrophe had occurred within the last few hours.

Forward and aft the interior of the yacht was perfectly watertight, the inrush being confined to the engine-room and stokehold by means of transverse bulkheads.

"Don't go below," cautioned the Scoutmaster, as Summers prepared to descend the companion-ladder leading to the state room. "Come for'ard with me, and let us see if we can drop anchor if necessary."

The two anchors were, like those of a modern pattern, "bedded" in the hawsepipes, only the crown and flukes being visible. All that was necessary to release them was to ease the compressor or brake that prevented the cable from running out.

More than once the Scoutmaster gave a glance at the weather, and with feelings of relief he noticed that the fog was momentarily clearing. One thing that puzzled him was the fact that the "Mayblossom" was in ten fathoms of water, yet sufficiently far from the land to prevent its being seen from a distance of not more than half a mile.

"Try another cast with the lead," he shouted to Osborne, who was within easy hailing distance.

The second sounding gave but eight fathoms, while the drag of the lead over the sandy bottom showed that the tide was taking both craft with considerable rapidity in a northerly direction.

"If this goes on we'll soon be ashore," declared Mr Carter. "Goodness only knows where we are. We'll anchor in time."

"And the 'Petrel,' sir?"

"She must anchor too. With this light breeze and strong tide she will be unable to keep in touch with us. 'Petrel,' ahoy! Stand by to anchor!"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Osborne smartly.

Five minutes later both craft were riding to their cables at a distance of a hundred yards apart, while Osborne took the precaution of getting a compass bearing of the "Mayblossom" in case the fog should increase to its former density.

"Now we're all serene," remarked Mr Carter. "All we can do is to wait till we can open up communication with the shore. While we are waiting, M'Kane, get the signal flags N C—you'll find them in a locker on the bridge, I don't doubt—and hoist them. No, we won't, though," he added as an afterthought. "Hoist Y P; that ought to bring a tug out to us as soon as possible after the signal has been read."

M'Kane doubled off to carry out the Scoutmaster's orders, and having found the signal flags in the place Mr Carter had expected, he toggled on the two flags and hoisted them to the mainmast head.

"There's a boat approaching, sir," he announced.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BLAZING HEATH

MR CARTER ran aft and looked in the direction indicated by M'Kane. Urged on at a rapid pace was a large ex-naval cutter, almost identically similar to the one the "Seals" had given to the Portchester Sea Scouts. She was manned by a crew of fifteen, of whom twelve were rowing while the rest sat aft. All save the coxswain were uniformly clad in dark blue and wore round caps of naval pattern.

"Coastguards, sir, I believe," said Summers.

"Too heavy a boat for that. Coastguards on this part of the coast would have a gig or whaler."

"Why, they're Sea Scouts," announced the Tenderfoot, who, having joined M'Kane on the bridge had discovered a pair of binoculars in the chart room and had made good use of them. "Well, that's something to be thankful for, at all events, although it beats me to know how they spotted us so quickly."

Rapidly the grey cutter approached till she was within easy hailing distance.

"Yacht, ahoy! Can we render assistance?" shouted the Scoutmaster in command.

"Ay, ay!" replied Mr Carter. "Come aboard."

Smartly the boat ranged alongside the derelict yacht, her oars were promptly "boated" while the bowman threw the end of the painter to Summers. The Scoutmaster of the cutter sprang on board the steam-yacht, quickly followed by all his crew save two, and Mr Carter was surprised to find himself confronted by his own double.

It would indeed be difficult to distinguish the two men apart. Complexion, features, hair, height and build were practically identical.

"Hulloa!" exclaimed the newcomer affably, and at the same time extending his left hand which Mr Carter shook heartily. "We never thought to find Sea Scouts in this pickle. Been run down?"

"Yes," replied Mr Carter. "We belong to the 9th Gosport Sea Scouts."

"But this is not the 'Petrel'?" queried the Scoutmaster of the cutter in obvious perplexity.

"No, there she lies," replied the "Petrel's" skipper, pointing to the ketch that, hitherto masked by the longer steam-yacht, had escaped the new arrivals' notice.

"Ah, that's more the ticket. We've heard of her. My name's Alleyne; S.M. of the 10th Poole Sea Scouts."

"Then we are not far from Poole?"

"Close to the Bar Buoy. You'll be able to see it presently. The fog's lifting. See: there's Old Harry."

And he pointed to a remarkable white pinnacle of rock that had just loomed up through the dispersing mist. "You're close to Studland Bay."

"That's capital!" ejaculated Mr Carter fervently. "The sooner we get inside Poole Harbour and have a good rest the better. We've had a trying time for the last fifteen hours or so; it was close on five o'clock yesterday morning when we left Dartmouth."

"You look rather worn out, if you don't mind my saying so," said Mr Alleyne. "Look here, I'll tell you: we'll take charge of this packet: it won't affect your share of salvage. I'll lend you a couple of hands to pilot the 'Petrel' up the channel. Wind and tide are fair so it won't be a long job. They'll put you on a decent pair of moorings that will hold your craft all right. Then we'll wait here till we

can communicate with the shore. There'll be a tug down from Poole within half an hour after receiving the message."

"We will be grateful to you," replied Mr Carter, "but we accept your offer only on one condition. That, if we do, you will take half of the salvage money."

"But we haven't done much," objected the Poole Scoutmaster.

"You will have by the time you've finished. There's one thing to be considered if we don't claim our share of salvage—the tug will collar the lot. I am looking at the thing from a business and not a sentimental point of view."

"Very well, then," agreed Mr Alleyne. "I'll see you later. Cartridge and Shott, you go with this gentleman and pilot his yacht up as far as Stakes. Put them on the 'Miranda's' buoy: she won't be back for another ten days at least."

In response to signals, Osborne sent Hornsby off with the dinghy, and into this the prize crew from the "Petrel" stepped, accompanied by two fair-haired, broad-shouldered Sea Scouts lent from the Poole Troop.

By the time the "Petrel's" canvas was hoisted and the anchor broken out, the fog had entirely dispersed, and the whole of the coast, from the chalk cliffs of Standfast Point to the bluff headland of Hengistbury hard by the town of Christchurch, was plainly visible. Right ahead lay the entrance to Poole Harbour, the narrow channel between the dangerous sandbanks being indicated by two lines of buoys.

"There's the acknowledgment!" exclaimed Osborne, pointing towards the coastguard station at Studland, where a red and white pennant had just been hoisted "close up" as a sign that the signal for the tug was understood.

Swiftly the "Petrel" glided past the sandy points guarding the entrance to Poole Harbour, and under the skilful helmsmanship of young Shott, threaded her way up the intricate yet well-beaconed main channel. But before she was abreast of Parkstone Pier a squat little tug, with dense masses of black smoke pouring from her funnel, came pelting at top speed towards the open sea.

"She wasn't long," remarked Sea Scout Cartridge. "She'll have the steam-yacht across the bar and alongside Hamworthy before the top of high water."

The Poole Sea Scouts did their work thoroughly, for not content with safely mooring the "Petrel" and doing most of the task of stowing canvas, they took the water-jars ashore and refilled them, besides bringing off fresh provisions, despatching telegrams and several other jobs to save the harassed "Seals."

In spite of the fact that all of the "Petrel's" crew had snatched a few hours' sleep during the passage from Dartmouth to Poole, they were so thoroughly tired that it was almost as much as they could do to keep from falling asleep before their belated breakfast. Had it not been for the assistance of their new-found chums, the lads would have neglected to eat.

"Now you'll be all right," said Cartridge cheerfully, when he and his comrades had completed the washing up of the breakfast things. "No need for any of you to keep watch; you're well out of the way of all traffic."

And with a promise to look them up again in the evening the two Poole Sea Scouts hailed a passing boat and were taken ashore.

In a very short space of time the crew of the "Petrel" were sleeping soundly, so soundly that they were quite unaware that the "Mayblossom," floundering

in tow of the powerful tug, had passed quite close to them and had been safely berthed alongside one of the Hamworthy wharves.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the "Seals" turned out, feeling considerably better for their eight hours' rest. A bathe over the side—the tide being slack—completed the revival of their jaded energies, and fresh as larks they prepared for the reception of their friends of the 10th Poole Sea Scouts.

"It is one of the most remarkable instances I have ever heard of," declared Scoutmaster Alleyne, upon coming on board. "The 'Mayblossom' was run into during the thick fog by a three-masted schooner. She was then apparently six miles S.S.E. of Anvil Point. The impact was so terrific and the hole in her side so extensive that the crew thought the yacht would sink almost at once. The owner, his guests, officers and crew took to the boats, but not before the engineers had taken precautions to prevent the explosion of the boilers. In a very few seconds the boats lost sight of the yacht, and every one felt certain that she had foundered. After rowing about for some time they were picked up by the crew of the schooner and landed at Weymouth, where they reported the loss of the yacht. You can imagine their surprise when they learnt by telegram that the 'Mayblossom,' though badly damaged, was lying safely in Poole Harbour. By the by, will it be convenient for you to pay a visit to the Receiver of Wrecks to-morrow at ten?"

"If we have to we must," replied Mr Carter. "As a matter of fact we ought to be starting for the east'ard. I hope it won't be a long business?"

Mr Alleyne shrugged his massive shoulders.

"It may," he said. "Of course if you want to be off the best thing you can do is to give me full

power to act on your behalf, but in any case you ought to make a statement to the official as to the circumstances under which you found the 'Mayblossom' adrift. By the by, I had almost forgotten. Here are three telegrams for you."

The first was from the harbourmaster at Weymouth stating, in reply to Mr Carter's inquiries, that no yawl by the name of "Black Drake" had put into that harbour.

"Perhaps she made for Lulworth, or put out to sea. She'll turn up all right," said the Poole Scoutmaster reassuringly. "If anything had happened to her we would be almost sure to have heard before this. Besides, there hasn't been much wind."

"But quite enough sea in Portland Race," added Mr Carter.

"That I can quite believe; but had it been half a gale I don't suppose the "Petrel" would be safe in harbour. Portland Race is no place for small craft, or large ones either if it comes to that."

The second telegram was from Dr Barbican.

Cinders was doing well and practically out of danger. A rousing cheer from the "Seals" greeted this announcement, the uproar completely mystifying their visitors until the identity and ailments of Cinders were duly explained.

The third was brief and to the point:

"Don't return: scoff the lot."

Mr Carter smiled.

"That removes a load from our minds, lads," he said. "I wired to the owner of the other 'Petrel' asking if I should send back the remainder of the provisions put on board by mistake. Well, I think the gift has been and will be duly appreciated. Osborne, get out the rest of that Devonshire cream; we will see how Dorset lads like that kind of tack."

Needless to say the Poole Sea Scouts could do their share in disposing of the provisions obtained under ludicrous yet awkward conditions; and for the next quarter of an hour chin-work and tongue-wagging were the order of things.

It was nearly nine o'clock before the Poole lads took their departure, having first exhorted a promise from their Hampshire brother Scouts to look them up in the morning. Then, after trimming and hoisting the anchor-lamp, and satisfying themselves that all was right "alow and aloft," the crew of the "Petrel" turned in to sleep the sleep that only health and contentment can provide.

All hands were up and about early on the following morning. It was indeed a glorious day for anything except sailing. The whole of Poole Harbour was bathed in brilliant sunshine; not a ripple disturbed the placid surface of the water, on which the reflections of surrounding objects were shown with mirror-like fidelity. From the chimneys of the pottery works columns of smoke ascended almost perpendicularly, till lost in the deep blue vault of sky. With the first of the flood tide the brown-sailed fishing-boats were being swept up to their moorings; their crews were tugging lustily at the long oars, for the drooping canvas was useless as a means of propulsion.

"Come on, lads," exclaimed Mr Carter, after the crew, with the exception of Penarth, had enjoyed a morning swim. "We'll have a stretch ashore before breakfast. Well, Penarth, how's the leg to-day? Still stiff? Then take it easy, and don't attempt to move about too much. We'll leave you in charge."

It was a fairly long row ashore, for the "Petrel" was moored just off the edge of the mud-bank fronting the Hamworthy side. A deep narrow

channel enabled the dinghy to come alongside a small landing stage, whence it was a short distance to the ferry across to Poole Town.

Threading their way through several narrow streets, the Sea Scouts found themselves in the High Street, where, despite the early hour, the shops were beginning to open.

"There's Mr Alleyne," said Webb.

Walking down the High Street on the other side of the road were three young fellows in flannels, bareheaded and with towels thrown lightly round their necks.

"Good morning!" exclaimed the Scoutmaster of the 10th Poole Sea Scouts. "You're ashore early. Let me introduce you to Mr Holland, the S.M. of the 12th Poole Scouts, and Mr Everton of the 6th Parkstone. They are off to camp for the week-end near Wareham this morning."

"Sea Scouts?"

"No," replied Mr Holland. "We can't all be Sea Scouts even in a port like Poole you know. I wish your fellows could look us up, Mr Carter."

"We may, if there's not enough wind for us to get under way this afternoon," replied the Gosport Scoutmaster. "At any rate we may see you start and give you a send-off. What time do you leave?"

"At eight: there's not much time to lose, so we must be moving, Alleyne," said Mr Everton. "In any case I suppose you'll bring your Sea Scouts to the Camp Fire to-night?"

Before Mr Alleyne could reply, a Scout mounted on a bicycle, suddenly applied his brakes, vaulted from the saddle and approached the group of Scoutmasters.

"I have just ridden in from Lake, sir," he announced, addressing Mr Holland. "There's a big

heath fire at Arne where the 16th Troop are encamped. They signalled to our fellows for assistance, and our Scoutmaster sent me in with the news."

"Have you a boat at Lake?" asked Mr Holland.

"Yes, sir, two."

"Good, we'll be there. All our fellows have cycles," said the Scoutmaster of the 12th Poole. "You'll go by water, I suppose, Alleyne? And you, Everton?"

"I'll 'phone to my Assistant Scoutmaster. He'll bring the Troop along. Can you lend me a boat, Alleyne?"

"Yes, she'll be alongside the ferry. I'll leave a boy in charge."

"Can we help?" asked Mr Carter.

"Rather," replied Mr Alleyne, as the other two Scoutmasters hurried off. "Come along!"

Down the High Street ran the "Seals" headed by the two Scoutmasters. Before they gained the quay their numbers were increased by a swarm of men and boys, for the news of the fire had spread with the greatest rapidity.

The 10th Poole Sea Scouts were awaiting their Scoutmaster, while with considerable forethought and commendable resource they had already sent and obtained permission for the use of two motor boats. Every moment was precious, and too much time would be wasted to proceed to the scene of the fire in their heavy cutter.

Into the two motor boats the Hampshire and Dorset Sea Scouts leapt, Mr Alleyne taking the wheel of one, and his Leader the helm of the other, since local knowledge was necessary in order to navigate the intricate channel.

Without the faintest trouble both motors began to

purr, and, the spray foaming from their bows, the heavily laden craft tore towards the scene of action.

As soon as the boats rounded the extremity of Hamworthy Quay, and opened out the broad expanse of the harbour the magnitude of the fire became apparent.

The high ground of Arne was outlined by an undulating edge of deep-coloured flames topped by dense masses of brown and black clouds.

"We've a tough job in front of us," remarked Mr Alleyne. "The flames have taken a good hold already. Ah! There goes the 12th! They haven't been long."

"Do you think we'll get there before them, sir?" asked Patrol-Leader Cartridge.

"We may: they've to row across. Try and get another knot out of her, Jackson!"

Sea Scout Jackson was no mean engineer. He knew how to get the best out of the motors, and slowly yet surely the boat drew away from her consort.

It seemed exasperating to the crew of the "Petrel" not to make straight for the scene of the fire, for the channel at one place bore right away from it. But they knew that to steer a straight course would result in running full tilt upon the mud.

Like a racehorse pitted against a carthorse, the motor-boat overtook and passed the rowing-boat containing Mr Holland's Scouts, who had to cross the channel much higher up than the place the Sea Scouts had started from; but the goal was now almost within reach, and within four minutes of each other the two motor-boats and the rowing-boat ran aground on the hard known as Russel Quay.

They were too deeply laden to get within leaping distance of the shore, but that troubled the Scouts not one jot. Over the bows and sides they jumped, and waded, knee deep in water, to the shore, till the low

cliffs were dotted with green, grey, brown and blue clad figures making their way to the scene of action.

Already there were nearly fifty Scouts, for in addition to those encamped on the south shore others had come in by cycle from Wareham and Lytchett, besides a number of farm-hands from the neighbouring villages of Arne.

"Hulloa, Alleyne!" sung out a tall, bearded Scoutmaster, whose bronzed face was literally smothered with soot and dust. "Glad you've come! Set your fellows to clear a track between the flames and the farm buildings. Holland, take your chaps and give those Wareham lads a hand. Who are these chaps?"

"Sea Scouts from Gosport," explained Mr Alleyne hurriedly.

"The more the merrier! No time for words! Here, you lads, you tackle that part, and try to keep the flames from traversing the foot-path."

Even in the confusion occasioned by the fire the workers possessed complete discipline. The Scoutmaster who had taken complete charge of the arrangements was loyally supported by his fellow Scoutmasters, who, in turn, could rely upon their lads to the uttermost limit.

The crew of the "Petrel" found themselves in extended formation facing a blaze of dull red flame that crackled and spluttered, roared and hissed, as the forked tongues leapt from bush to bush. It was useless to attempt to subdue the flames: all the Sea Scouts could do was to take steps to prevent the devouring element from getting a hold upon the heather and gorse on the other side of the sandy path. Once that thickly-clad ground was alight the fate of two hayricks and several out-houses was sealed.

Scoutmaster and Sea Scouts worked like Trojans, some armed with leafy branches to beat out any flying

sparks, others throwing sand upon the heather nearest the path, while a pool of water having been discovered, with which the heath abounds, M'Kane and the Tenderfoot carried bucket after bucket full of water and threw their contents upon the parched-up heather.

For an hour they worked desperately. Sweltering in the sun's rays, scorched by the glowing heat, and half suffocated by the pungent smoke, they laboured to keep their line of defence intact.

Suddenly a farm labourer ran up to Mr Carter and gripped him by the shoulder.

"Call yourn boys off, zur," he exclaimed. "T' fire be all behind!"

This warning was the first intimation the Scoutmaster had of the impending danger. Although the Sea Scouts had done their part of the work, the flames had broken the cordon well away to the right and left, and spreading with extreme rapidity had cut off the lads' retreat.

A succession of short, sharp blasts on Mr Carter's whistle brought the six Sea Scouts rallying round the Scoutmaster.

"Off with your scarfs, lads," he ordered. "Tie them round your mouths and follow me. You do the same and come with us too," he added to the farm-hand.

Twenty yards from the path Mr Carter came to a halt on a rounded knoll. The extending horns of fire had nearly met. Only a path barely ten yards in width separated the rapidly converging flames.

"Double!" he shouted.

Forcing his way through the prickly undergrowth the Scoutmaster led the way, and without serious mishap the patrol and the countryman found themselves outside the ring of fire.

"Bear away to the right," ordered Mr Carter. "We must get in touch with the rest of the fellows. I'm afraid the ricks will have to go."

Back and back the Sea Scouts were forced by the rapidly moving flames, till they found themselves on a sandy stretch of shore lapped by the waves. One glance showed that their retreat was cut off, for on either hand the fire was raging right to the water's edge, while the heat was too fierce to allow anyone to pass. In a very few minutes the ground on which they stood would be untenable.

"It's lucky that the tide is up," declared the Scoutmaster cheerily. "Otherwise we would be trapped by the mud. We'll have to swim for it."

"May-be, zur," exclaimed the farm-hand. "But oi can't swim, an' t' water's deep out in t' middle of Arne Bay. 'Tain't very far over to Shipstal, but it might be a matter o' fifty moile fur the loikes of oi."

"You can't stop here to be scorched to a cinder," said Mr Carter, looking rather dubiously at the man's bulk, and wondering what might happen if he started to struggle in deep water. "Will you promise to keep quiet if we hold you up?"

"Oi'm turble skeared," said the man.

"There's no need to be," said Mr Carter, then stepping behind him he grasped his arms tightly behind his back.

"A scarf there, Osborne," he exclaimed. "Be sharp!"

The farm-hand was too bewildered to offer any resistance. In a trice his arms were secured, while M'Kane deftly passed his scarf round the man's ankles. Then, lifted by five pairs of strong hands, the helpless yokel was carried down into the sea till the water rose above the Sea Scouts' waists.

The terrified yokel screamed as he felt himself in the water, but screams didn't matter since he was incapable of struggling. Supported by the Scoutmaster and Osborne the man was floated towards the distant Shipstal Point, the rest of the Sea Scouts swimming close alongside, and revelling in the sea after their tussel with the fire.

Presently the farm-labourer, finding that he was in no immediate danger, soon grew calmer, but it became evident to Mr Carter that the task the Sea Scouts had undertaken was no light one.

"Don't hurry, lads," he cautioned. "Remember you're swimming in your shoes. We'll manage it all in good time."

Across the hitherto placid waters of Arne Bay came a dense cloud of smoke. With comparative suddenness the wind had sprung up from a south-westerly direction. That meant that the fire might be kept under control, but on the other hand the swimmers stood a fair chance of being suffocated.

CHAPTER XXX

MEETING OLD FRIENDS

"AHOY, there!"

A clear boyish voice fell upon the ears of the Sea Scouts as they swam steadily through the smoke-enshrouded water. Coming up behind them was a boat manned by two Parkstone Scouts.

It did not take long to pick up the swimmers including the farm-hand, and the boat, deeply-laden with eight dripping forms in addition to the two Scouts, was headed towards the land.

"Come on, you fellows," exclaimed Osborne as soon as they gained the shore. "Our clothes will soon be dry."

Great was the relief of every one of the fire-fighters to see the "Seals" reappear upon the scene, for doubts had been entertained for their safety. In fact one of the Assistant Scoutmasters had been severely burned in attempting to get in touch with the "Petrel's" crew.

Thanks to the sudden springing up of the wind the progress of the fire was checked, and the blaze allowed to burn itself out; but it was recognised that had it not been for the prompt measures taken by the Scouts in keeping back the progress of the conflagration, the damage done must have been far greater than it otherwise was.

"Yes," said one of the keepers. "When maaster 'e said to me, 'Them Scouts want to camp out here,' I says, 'Well, zur, there won't be no harm done.' But my mate Garge, 'e says, 'Drat

em. Boys will be boys, Scouts or no Scouts." Maaster 'e says, 'Tell 'em they can come 'ere, Jim,' an' so they comed."

"But you don't mean to suggest that our Scouts caused the fire?" asked one of the Scoutmasters.

"No, zur, that I doan't. Fire started away over yonder, far from where they be stayin'. We'm all grateful to be sure, for them youngsters worked hard. Garge an' me have to thank 'em that our cottages bean't a-burned down, an' I'm main certain the governor will be pleased."

"Anyway, I don't think we need stay here any longer," observed Mr Alleyne. "That belt of charred heath will effectively keep the flames from spreading. How about the Receiver of Wrecks, Mr Carter?"

"I remembered, but this business was more important," replied Mr Carter. "Suppose we call this afternoon?"

"I will ask him by telephone as soon as I get back," said the Scoutmaster of the 10th Poole Sea Scouts. "This bit of work has upset the other fellows' camping arrangements, I fear. Let's form up our Troops and get back to the quay."

The way back to the boat was by a circuitous route, for the area consumed by the fire had overlapped the direct path taken by the Scouts on landing.

Proudly conscious of having done their duty the lads stepped out briskly. On the whole they had come off lightly; even the "Seals," who, in addition to fighting the flames, had had to take refuge in the sea, looked little the worse. Their clothes were rent by contact with the thorns, their faces, arms and legs scratched by brambles and flushed with the heat, but otherwise they had escaped injury.

"Just my luck," growled Penarth, when the crew

returned to the "Petrel." "Anyhow, I had an awfully decent view of the fire from here. And there have been two visitors—awful swells."

"Who were they?" asked Osborne.

"One was the owner of the 'Mayblossom.' He was awfully decent, for when I told him that I ought not to answer any questions about the yacht, he patted me on the back and told me that a still tongue makes a wise head."

"He wasn't annoyed?" asked Mr Carter.

"No, sir; I explained that you were away, and that nothing had to be said until you saw the Receiver of Wrecks, and he replied, 'Very good, I quite understand.'"

At three o'clock that afternoon Mr Carter and Osborne, in accordance with a previous arrangement, went ashore to meet Mr Alleyne and Patrol-Leader Cartridge. The four proceeded to the Custom House where the question of salvage was discussed with the Receiver and the owner of the "Mayblossom."

The latter, delighted to find that his dearly-prized yacht was not lying at the bottom of the sea, made no objection to the amount named by the Receiver of Wrecks, and the Scouts left with the prospect of adding forty-five pounds to their respective Troop funds, while the owner and master of the tug seemed equally satisfied with their share of the award.

Later in the afternoon the wind fell light, and Mr Carter wisely decided not to put to sea. Although the tide would be in the yacht's favour the prospect of a run across to the Needles, arriving, perhaps, after dark, did not recommend itself. Consequently he preferred to fall back upon the original programme and make an early morning start.

At four A.M. the "Petrel" dropped her temporary moorings and started with the last of the ebb-tide,

and, notwithstanding the early hour, their comrades of the 10th Poole turned up in force to speed the parting guests.

"Mind you look us up again," shouted Shott.

"We will, now we know the way in," replied Osborne; then, as the "Petrel" glided past the Poole Sea Scouts' boat the crew of the latter "tossed oars" and made the shore echo to the sound of three rousing cheers, to which the "Seals" responded with equal fervour.

Without mishap the yacht found her way down the tortuous but well-marked channel, and was soon tossing in the long swell on the bar. Here the wind, hitherto light, failed utterly, and with the very last of the tide she drifted broadside on towards the Bar Buoy.

Then, with astonishing luck, the wind piped up from the south'ard, just as the "Petrel" began drifting back into Poole Harbour with the first of the flood.

With all canvas set she quickly "settled into her stride," and mile after mile was reeled off.

"What's that ahead?" asked the Scoutmaster, pointing to a white cliff that was appearing above the skyline.

No one seemed to know. Osborne was on the point of going below to consult the chart when Penarth hazarded the opinion that it was the Isle of Wight.

"Can't be," objected the Tenderfoot. "If it were you would see the Needles."

"Penarth is right," said Mr Carter. "We are nearly in sight of home. It won't be long before the Needles become visible."

"Do we pass them, sir?"

"Not exactly. I mean to make for the North

Channel close to Hurst Castle. But look over there: on your port bow."

A dark-looking object had just appeared on the surface, remaining but for a few seconds before disappearing in a smother of foam.

"A submarine!" ejaculated Reid. "That's the conning-tower."

"A submarine of sorts," answered the Scoutmaster. "It's a porpoise. There it is again!"

"And there's another," added M'Kane. "They are coming this way."

Less than ten yards from the yacht a huge monster rose almost clear of the water, made a semi-circular movement and slid out of sight. Then the crew distinctly felt a tremor underneath, as if the "Petrel's" keel had scraped the back of one of these enormous but harmless denizens of the deep.

An hour later the "Petrel" was off Hengistbury Head, travelling quickly with wind and tide. Ahead the slender white tower of Hurst Lighthouse was rapidly becoming plainer to the eye.

"What's that yacht doing?" asked Webb, pointing to a craft labouring with head-sails only.

"Looks as if there's something wrong with her," observed Mr Carter, bringing out his trusty binoculars. "Yes, something's carried away aloft. Her main-sail's all in a heap on deck. We'll stand by and see if we can give any assistance."

The crew of the "Petrel" were intently watching the crippled yacht when the Tenderfoot, who was making use of the telescope, suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, it's the 'Bullfinch'; Mr Banks' yacht."

"I believe you're right, Webb," declared Mr Carter. "Yes, I can see him standing against the mast, and there's a boy in a red cap at the tiller."

It did not take the "Petrel" long to come within hailing distance.

"'Bullfinch,' ahoy," shouted the Scoutmaster. "What's amiss?"

"Bless my soul, it's Carter!" exclaimed the skipper and owner of the cutter. "So you've got round, eh? I say, can you spare me a handy lad for a few minutes?"

"Certainly," replied Mr Carter, ordering the "Petrel" to be hove-to within half a cable's length of the "Bullfinch." "What's amiss?" he repeated.

"Peak halliards parted," he replied, "and I've sprained my shoulder and cannot go aloft. My boy is new to the job; I don't want to run the risk of letting him undertake the business."

"Who'll volunteer?" asked Mr Carter. "What, all of you? Webb, you're handy at climbing, suppose you go; there may be some splicing required, so you, M'Kane, will come in very useful."

The two Scouts quickly brought the dinghy alongside, jumped in and rowed to the "Bullfinch." Waiting their opportunity, for the yacht under head-sails only was pitching a lot, they scrambled on board and allowed the dinghy to drop astern.

The rest of the crew of the "Petrel" watched the Tenderfoot's manœuvres with the keenest interest, as with the end of a coil of rope made fast round his waist he swarmed aloft by means of the throat halliards.

Standing on the cross-trees quite thirty feet from the deck, he had to hang on with one hand like grim death, for the pendulum-like movement of the mast made his task a difficult one.

Passing a whipped end of the rope through the upper block, Webb paid it out sufficiently for Mr Banks to reach it. Then, having threaded the rope

through the block on the gaff, the skipper sent it aloft to where the Tenderfoot stood; and he in turn rove it through the second of the mast-head blocks. In less than four minutes that part of the task was completed. All that was left was the splicing in of the sister-hooks, which M'Kane performed rapidly and neatly.

"Come below a minute," said the highly gratified Mr Banks; then when the two Sea Scouts were in the cabin he continued, "I know it's against the regulations for you fellows to accept any reward for this important service, so I can only give you my heartiest thanks. I can't say what I am going to before my boy, but it's this: he's a duffer and you are not. Next time I'll ship a Sea Scout aboard the 'Bullfinch'; then I'll know I've laid hold of some one who is up to the mark. Had a good run up Channel?"

"Yes, sir," replied M'Kane.

"Much wind?"

"Not while we were under way. It blew hard when we were in harbour."

"Well, I hope to hear more about your cruise later on. I mustn't keep you. Thank Mr Carter for me, and tell him that, but for the Sea Scouts, the 'Bullfinch' might have got into difficulties, for with the wind in this direction she couldn't possibly make Weymouth. Good-bye, lads, and once more, thank you."

With a mutual dipping of ensigns the yachts parted company, the "Bullfinch" shaping a course westward, while the "Petrel" was steered towards the Hurst Castle Lighthouse that was rapidly becoming more and more distinct.

It is between Hurst Castle and Cliff End Fort in the Isle of Wight that the Solent begins, but in order to gain it all but the largest vessels have the choice

of two channels: either to keep between the Shingles—a detached shoal—and the Hampshire shore, or between the Shingles and the western part of the Isle of Wight.

Mr Carter had chosen the former course, and with a very strong tide under her the "Petrel" was slipping over the ground at the rate of nearly ten knots.

The Solent in this part was practically deserted, the only other craft in sight being a yawl standing in close to the Isle of Wight shore.

Summers sighted her first, and bringing the telescope to bear he announced:

"There's the 'Black Drake,' sir."

"You're right, Summers. How remarkable! We arranged a race from Dartmouth to the Solent, and after losing each other for two days we arrive absolutely neck and neck. Down helm slightly, Osborne. On converging courses, we'll get within hailing distance before we are abreast Fort Victoria."

"'Black Drake,' ahoy," sung out Mr Carter, when the two yachts were within hailing distance.

"Ahoy, there!" was the reply. "Where are you bound for?"

"Gosport."

"Won't do it this tide, Carter. You'll meet the west-going stream in half an hour. We're making for Yarmouth. We're almost starving."

"How's that?"

"Been becalmed fifty miles from shore for thirty-six hours. Only picked up the breeze at eight this morning. Swallowed the last of our grub at sunrise."

"Stand by, then," shouted Mr Carter in a practical manner. "We are coming under your lee."

Then as the "Petrel" drew close to her consort, M'Kane and Hornsby dexterously threw two loaves into the cockpit of the yawl. But they were not so successful with a pot of strawberry jam, for the

earthenware jar struck the coamings of the "Black Drake's" well, and bursting like a shell liberally bespattered her crew with its dark red contents, the major portion falling into Scoutmaster Favershaw's lap to the detriment of his white flannels.

It was as much as the "Petrel's" crew could do to keep straight faces, but when the Sea Scouts of the "Black Drake" saw the humorous side of the affair and burst out laughing, the "Seals" joined in unrestrainedly.

"I think, lads," said Mr Carter, when the mirth had subsided, "that we will put into Yarmouth also. I had hoped to reach Gosport this afternoon, but a Solent tide must be treated with respect. It's impossible to stem it with this light breeze. Now, stand by, and be sharp with those head-sail sheets, or there'll be trouble ahead."

CHAPTER XXXI

MISADVENTURES AT YARMOUTH

THE "Black Drake" was the first to draw level with the leading marks to Yarmouth Harbour, the "Petrel" being fifty yards astern. The actual entrance between the extremity of the breakwater and the grey walls of the old castle seemed barely wide enough to admit a craft of the size of the "Petrel," while to add to the difficulty the wind was dead ahead.

Three tacks did the "Black Drake" make, then she ran aground almost abreast the tar-barrel beacon marking the end of the breakwater. To attempt to render assistance on the part of the "Petrel" was out of the question, so, going about just in time, she slipped past the yawl's stern and on the starboard tack.

"Lee-o!" ordered Mr Carter.

Osborne promptly put the helm down, and the yacht began to turn into the wind when a "foul puff," from between some of the buildings on the quay, caught the head-sails. The "Petrel," taken aback, began to drift slowly towards the stone wall.

Seated on the edge of the quay were half a dozen old "shellbacks" sunning themselves and generally passing away the time in contemplative meditation of the water. Irresistibly the "Petrel's" bowsprit swept them from their cosy corner. Some throwing themselves backwards rolled out of the way, others, showing more alacrity than they had done for weeks

past, skipped like young rams over the stout spar, while one, finding himself in danger of being knocked overboard, scrambled along the bowsprit and gained the "Petrel's" deck.

Now it so happened that at the seaward end of the quay was a pile of empty barrels awaiting shipment. Had the yacht's bowsprit been a foot shorter the disaster might not have happened, but that extra foot made all the difference. The bowsprit end caught the lowermost corner of the pyramid, and the next instant, with a terrific crash, a dozen barrels rolled into the harbour.

Accidents rarely happen alone. On the slipway was a cattle barge from which a flock of sheep and half a score of fat pigs were being landed.

Terrified by the crash of the falling barrels the four-footed mob took flight, dashing up the narrow street with a crowd of drovers, fishermen, coastguards and yacht-hands in pursuit.

The first to meet the charge was a portly yachtsman, who, having been marketing, was returning to the quay with a can of milk in one hand, a string bag full of vegetables in the other, and a loaf under one arm counterbalanced by a brown paper parcel of groceries.

Before he had time to realise what was happening an inconsiderate porker dashed betwixt his legs, and in an instant this particular sample of Yarmouth commodities was scattered far and wide.

Meanwhile the barrels had saved the "Petrel" from further damage, and the harbourmaster, promptly grasping the situation, got her head round by means of a boathook. For an instant she wavered, then, her head-sails drawing, she gathered way on the port tack.

During the confusion no one thought of the "Black

Drake," but with the still rising tide she had slipped off into deep water and was close astern.

"Luff her up, sir!" shouted the harbourmaster, while simultaneously a shout of "Down helm, there!" came from the yawl, for, unable to stand closer to the west side, she had just gone about.

"We're aground, sir!" shouted Osborne, feeling the "Petrel's" keel ploughing its way through the mud.

One glance showed that the "Black Drake" was also "on the putty," although still moving slowly ahead. It was impossible to avoid a collision. All that could be done was to mitigate its effect.

"Out fenders, lads!" ordered Mr Carter.

Barely in time. With a jarring, grinding sound the "Black Drake" struck the "Petrel" a glancing blow on the starboard side. The former's mainsail scraped along the weather shrouds of the ketch, then, locked in an iron embrace, both yachts drifted into deep water.

The wind had temporarily fallen light, and caught by the strong flood the colliding craft began to drift helplessly in the tideway.

Right in their course was a little four-ton yawl, moored, as is the custom in Yarmouth, fore and aft between two small buoys. It was quite evident that should the interlocked yachts drift down upon the yawl, the latter would stand little chance against the twenty-odd tons dead weight that threatened her.

"Clear away that anchor!" shouted Mr Carter, while Mr Favershaw issued a similar order.

In the case of the "Petrel," the crew were baulked for the time being. The "Black Drake's" bowsprit shrouds lay athwart the anchor, pinning it to the rigging-screws to which it was lashed; while it was

AN INCONSIDERATE PORKER DASHED BETWEEN HIS LEGS

certain that before the crew of the yawl could stock their anchor and drop it overboard, the threatened calamity would take place.

Just then the owner of the small craft, who was busy in his little cabin, heard the commotion and came on deck. Quickly he grasped the situation, and scrambling forward cast off the bow mooring rope and allowed the craft to swing. Then performing a similar operation with the stern rope, he had the satisfaction of seeing his prized yacht drift clear of her dangerous neighbours.

"We're aground again!" announced the skipper of the "Black Drake."

"So much the better," replied Mr Carter; then calling away the dinghy's crew he ordered them to run out a warp to a post a short distance off.

Now came the delicate task of lowering the sails. Up to the present they had, by a sheer slice of luck, escaped being torn, but should the wind pipe up ere they were stowed, a considerable amount of damage would result in a very short space of time.

Beyond a slight rent in the "Black Drake's" mainsail the task was satisfactorily performed, and the crews were at liberty to discover the extent of the damage due to the collision. Curiously enough the shock, though severe, had done little or no harm beyond scraping some paint from the "Petrel's" side and starting the chain plate of the starboard bowsprit shrouds, while in addition to the rent in her mainsail the yawl had her bobstay carried away.

Two Sea Scouts were sent to tender apologies to the owner of the yawl for having caused him to cast off from her moorings. This task they undertook with a certain amount of trepidation, the aforesaid owner having the appearance of a fierce military officer; but

in a few minutes they returned with a most satisfactory reply, and with the agreeable knowledge that the owner was not so stern as he looked but, on the other hand, of a most genial nature.

In the interval, boatmen had retrieved the floating casks, the sheep and pigs had been drawn back to their pens, the capsized yachtsman had the good sense to make the best of his encounter with the fugitive animals, and once more Yarmouth subsided into its customary quietude.

On the top of the tide the "Petrel" and the "Black Drake" were hauled off and moored, and, as the cooks on the former had been busy, dinner was ready by the time all on decks had been snugged down. At Mr Carter's invitation the famished crew of the yawl invaded their smaller consort, and between them the Sea Scouts reduced the state of the "Petrel's" larder to that of the "Black Drake's"

While the meal was in progress, Mr Favershaw related the adventures of the "Black Drake" after parting company with the "Petrel" in the fog in West Bay. She, too, had gone about, hoping to get in touch with the ketch, but the manœuvre only resulted in putting a greater distance between the two yachts. Then, fearing to close the land, and equally reluctant to risk a passage through Portland Race, the Scoutmaster ordered a course to be set due south. By so doing they ran out of the fog quicker than the "Petrel" had done, but the wind fell light, eventually becoming a dead calm, and for hours the "Black Drake" drifted aimlessly with the tide. When hunger threatened them they were too far from passing steamers to signal their wants, and it was not until after the last crust had been eaten that the long-hoped-for breeze sprang up.

After the midday meal was over the two Scoutmasters suggested a stroll on shore, to which plan the Scouts agreed with alacrity. They inspected the old castle, paid a visit to the interesting church, and were told the history of the statue of Sir Robert Holmes, how that doughty old Governor of the Wight had captured a French vessel on which was found a statue of King Louis XIV. The sculptor happening to be amongst the prisoners, Holmes, with a keen sense of humour, compelled the artist to substitute his captor's features for those of the French king, and thus at no cost to himself, Sir Robert had a striking effigy to hand down to posterity.

Wandering down a narrow street the Sea Scouts found themselves on a cliff road to the east of the little town where the action of the sea demolishing the land was most marked. Here the lads seated themselves upon the grass and feasted upon the sea-scape before them, for the Solent was dotted with passing shipping.

Suddenly Scoutmaster Favershaw gave the order, "Patrols, alert!"

Up sprang the lads in time to see a patrol of Scouts ascending the slightly sloping roadway. There were eight of them in full war paint, while with them was an Assistant Scoutmaster, holding the hand of a little girl about nine.

When nearly abreast o the Sea Scouts the patrol halted, and the Assistant Scoutmaster came forward.

"Anything amiss?" asked Mr Favershaw, after returning the salute, and looking inquiringly at the child.

"Yes, sir," replied the Assistant Scoutmaster. "A child has been lost down Bouldner way, and her

mother, who is bedridden, asked us if we could trace her. This little girl was with the child earlier in the afternoon, so she is showing us the place where she last saw her."

"Would you like us to join in the search?"

"Most certainly; in fact it was for that reason I halted the patrol."

"Carry on, then," rejoined Scoutmaster Favershaw. "Is it far?"

"About three quarters of a mile from here."

Needless to say the Sea Scouts seized the opportunity of doing practical scouting ashore with the greatest alacrity. A quarter of an hour's march along the road brought them to a footpath leading towards the sea, with a hedge on the left hand and a wire fence on the right. At the bottom of the hill a stile gave access to the shore, which was composed of shingle interspersed with patches of blue clay. At a short distance along the waterside the ground rose gradually from the summit of an irregular line of low cliffs, and was broken by patches of gorse and brambles.

"Shall we extend here?" asked Mr Carter.

"A little farther on, I think," replied the Yarmouth Assistant Scoutmaster. "You'll see why in a minute."

Presently the Scouts came to a shallow stream that threaded its way down into a fairly broad pond. The overflow from the pond trickled over a ridge of clay and shingle into the sea.

"This is where this little girl says she lost sight of her friend," said the Assistant Scoutmaster. "See, there are two distinct lines of footprints going in the same direction as ourselves, and only one—this girl's—returning, so it is evident that the lost child is not this side of the stream."

"That's reasonable deduction," agreed Mr Carter, "unless she has fallen into the water."

"Which is too shallow, except in the centre, to drown anyone," added the Assistant Scoutmaster.

The three Patrol Leaders were sent forward to attempt to follow the trail, but as soon as it left the blue clay the dried-up grass effectually destroyed the spoor.

"How far does this thicket extend?" asked Mr Favershaw.

"Nearly to Hampstead—quite two miles."

"And how broad is it?"

"Roughly it averages two hundred yards."

"Good!" ejaculated the Scoutmaster of the "Black Drake." "We'll extend the Scouts in open order at ten yards' interval along this side of the stream; then they will all advance, beating every bush as they do so. You understand, lads?"

A chorus of assent greeted the instructions of the senior Scoutmaster, and quickly the Scouts extended to the right, till the shrill notes of Mr Carter's whistle announced that the formation was complete.

The sweeping tactics were slow but none the less sure. Each bush was carefully searched, every one of the numerous depressions in the ground systematically examined. Wherever an expanse of clay or soft earth existed it was given particular attention for possible footprints, but without result. Once clear of the mud at the outlet of the pond the little wanderer had studiously avoided the clayey spots, keeping to the short dry turf.

In an hour, after a mile of the rough ground had been traversed, Summers found the lost child sound asleep by the side of a nut-bush. His first thought was to shout to those nearest to him the news

of his discovery; but restraining his excitement just in time, he ran first to the left to inform Hornsby and then to the right to let M'Kane hear the news. These two in turn communicated the intelligence to the rest of the line, and Scouts and Sea Scouts rallied round the sleeping child.

"I wouldn't shout, sir," Summers explained to his Scoutmaster. "I thought that perhaps the kid would be frightened if she awoke suddenly and found a stranger by her."

"Quite right, my lad," said Mr Favershaw approvingly. "Now we've brought her girl friend she won't have much cause to be alarmed."

"Why not let her sleep?" suggested the Assistant Scoutmaster of the Yarmouth Troop. "Our fellows have their staves: we'll make a stretcher."

In a very few minutes a stretcher, composed of scarfs looped between two staves, was made, and very carefully the child was lifted on to it. Still sleeping soundly she was borne homewards, till just as the Scouts re-entered the little town the child awoke.

"That's making slight amends for the commotion we caused upon our arrival," remarked Mr Carter as the Sea Scouts made their way to the boats. "It was rather an ignominious way of entering the harbour."

"It was," assented Mr Favershaw. "But it only bears out the truth of my assertion that a fellow is always liable to be let down in seamanship: sometimes through his own fault and sometimes by the peculiarities of wind and tide. Personally I frankly admit that I've been afloat in yachts of all sizes for the last fifteen years, and I have still a lot to learn. If ever I come across a man who professes

to be an unimpeachable authority on all matters pertaining to the sea, I put him down as a boaster."

"Then I suppose with my five years' experience I am an infant at the game?" remarked Mr Carter.

"H'm, yes; but I'll say one thing, Carter: you're a fairly promising infant. From what I've seen of the 'Petrel' and her crew you haven't done badly."

CHAPTER XXXII

DISMASTED

THE crew of the "Petrel" couldn't understand it. They had telegraphed to Dr Barbican to ask how Cinders was progressing almost as soon as they arrived and went ashore at Yarmouth. When they called for the reply it was not forthcoming, neither did the following morning bring any news.

"We cannot wait any longer," said Mr Carter, "or we shall lose our tide. See, the 'Black Drake' is already getting under way."

It was blowing fairly hard from the north-east, and the wind meeting the surging east-going tide caused the Solent to be a smother of foam. The few yachts that were visible were plugging along under close-reefed canvas, while even the hardy Thames barges, which are familiar objects all round the coast, had brought up in the Roads rather than risk a passage down west.

"We'll have a fine dusting for the last day of our cruise," remarked Penarth. "It will be fine."

"Yes, under easy canvas," added Osborne. "I suppose, sir, we won't hoist the mizzen?"

"No, she'll turn to windward quite easily without that. Set the storm-jib, M'Kane. Is everything lashed down below?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Hornsby, to whom this particular task had been delegated.

Partly sheltered from the wind by the houses by the quay the "Petrel's" sails fluttered in the breeze. All was ready to cast off; the stern mooring had

already been let go, and all that kept the yacht from forging ahead was a stout rope passing through a ring on the bow-mooring buoy, each end leading back to the yacht.

"Stand by a moment," ordered the Scoutmaster. "We must wait till the 'Black Drake' passes us. She's under way now."

The yawl, with only one reef down, was making slow progress against the tide within the harbour. At each tack she gained little more than her own length, for before she could gather way the narrowness of the channel compelled her to go about.

The crew of the "Petrel" watched her anxiously as she beat past them. They realised that should she miss stays there was the danger of a collision; but coolness and good seamanship on the part of the ship's company of the "Black Drake" prevailed, and without mishap she gained the open sea.

"She'll be lucky if she makes Littlehampton to-day," commented Mr Carter, as the yawl heeled over to a particularly hard puff. "Of course they know what their boat can do better than I do, but it seems as if they're carrying too much canvas."

The Scoutmaster was on the point of giving the order to let go when a boat came alongside.

"Telegram for you, sir," announced the waterman.

"What's wrong now?" wondered Mr Carter. Unless he were expecting a telegram he regarded their receipt with considerable uneasiness. He felt certain that it could not be from Plymouth, as the doctor was almost bound to send a message by return.

But he was mistaken. The wire was from Dr Barbican: "Cinders practically fit. Omitted to add 'Wight' to my telegram yesterday."

"That accounts for it, lads," explained the Scoutmaster. "The first reply must have gone to Great

Yarmouth. Now we can start on the strength of good news—cast off there, M'Kane!"

Without once touching ground the "Petrel" beat up to within a dozen yards of the quay, then, close-hauled, headed for the open sea. When clear of the castle and the pier she caught the full force of the wind and sea, and although the spindrift flew in clouds and the wind whistled through the weather rigging, the behaviour of the stiff little craft was beyond reproach.

Snugly clad in oilskins and sou'westers the lads thoroughly enjoyed themselves, while their zest was increased by the prospect of a race with the "Black Drake" and visions of home, sweet home before the end of the day.

The yawl had stood well over towards the Hampshire shore and was now almost lost to sight in the misty atmosphere. In spite of her larger sail area she was not pointing so high or travelling so fast as the "Petrel," and more than likely a few tacks would bring both craft about level.

"They're making a mistake in standing so far over," said Mr Carter. "Do you know why?"

"Because, according to the chart, there is more tide on the Isle of Wight side of the Solent, sir," replied Webb.

"Right you are, Webb; now how did you find that out?"

"By reading it up in the Sailing Directions, sir. M'Kane and I had an argument about it last night."

"Look how far we've been carried to windward by the tide already," exclaimed Hornsby, pointing to the shore. "We're opposite those new houses we passed on our way to Bouldner yesterday. The tide is surging along."

Several of the lads turned to look in the direction

indicated, and the next moment they felt sorry for having done so, for a huge wave striking the "Petrel" full on the starboard quarter, burst over the cockpit. The water, striking with about the same force as if pumped through a fire-hose, found its way down the collars of their oilskins and trickled down their legs.

"I couldn't help it," said Osborne, who was steering. "This tricky cross-sea cannot be avoided."

"No, you must let her ramp right through it and never mind the spray," added the Scoutmaster. "I doubt whether an open boat would stand up to it. Hulloa! There's the 'Black Drake' going about."

See-sawing up and down the yawl ran up into the wind and paid off on the other tack. When the two yachts passed each other the "Petrel" was only about two hundred yards astern.

"Isn't she heeling," commented Webb, for the yawl's lee planks were awash and her canvas wet with spray almost up to the peak. "Is it safe?"

"As long as her gear is good," answered the Scoutmaster. "All the same I think she would do better with less canvas. Ah! I thought so, they're stowing the mizzen. We'll put about now, in case they lose a man overboard during the operation."

The stowing of the mizzen was performed without mishap, the sturdy Sea Scouts of the "Black Drake" working splendidly in spite of the acute angle of her decks. Although only a small sail the pressure on it had been very great, and without it she appeared to be making better weather than before.

Both yachts were now on the port tack, the "Petrel" being a quarter of a mile astern and slightly to leeward of her friendly rival. Still she was pointing higher, and with a slight superiority in speed she might yet hope to overtake the yawl.

Osborne had "got the hang" of the tiller. He

was getting every available ounce out of the "Petrel," keeping her ramping without an attempt at "pinching" her. His Scoutmaster said not a word, but regarded the young helmsman with genuine admiration. He realised that the Leader of the "Seals" had the instincts of a true seaman.

When next going about—off Hamstead Ledge—the distance between the yachts had decreased to less than four hundred yards, while if anything the "Petrel" had gained the windward berth. Content with this, Osborne eased her still more, and with every stitch of her reduced canvas drawing, the ketch tore through the short choppy waves.

Half way across, Osborne had to let the yacht fall away in order to pass astern of a huge German liner, whose passengers waved encouragingly to the comparatively small cockleshell with its youthful crew. This deviation of the course lost the "Petrel" the advantage she had taken more than half an hour to gain, and on going about off Beaulieu Coastguard Station the "Black Drake" was once more slightly to windward.

"Two more tacks ought to bring us to Cowes Roads," observed Penarth.

"We'll hug the Island shore as we approach Cowes," added Mr Carter. "Close tacks till we reach Osborne Bay. There will be a wicked sea on the Roads unless I'm very much mistaken. Look here, M'Kane, we'll hoist a signal to the 'Blake Drake.' Perhaps they don't know that it is advisable to work close along shore."

M'Kane produced the signal book and found that the letters L T meant "Keep under the land." These flags he bent to the halliards and sent aloft. A few minutes later the "Black Drake" hoisted the affirmative pennant, but instead of doing as the signal

suggested she stood over towards the West Lepe Buoy where the sea was breaking heavily.

"I can't understand it," remarked Mr Carter, "but I suppose she knows her own business best. At any rate we'll keep well over on this side. Put her about again, Osborne."

Now it afterwards transpired that the "Black Drake" had read the "Petrel's" signals wrongly. She had mistaken letter T for E, both of which are red, white and blue, but the former is a square and the latter a triangular flag, or, to give it its proper designation, a pennant. Thus, instead of interpreting the signal as it actually was—"Keep under the land," the message was received as L E—"Do not anchor on any account."

"I don't mean to," remarked Scoutmaster Favershaw. "At all events not till we get to Cowes"—for he had already realised that the weather was too heavy to attempt to leave the shelter of the Isle of Wight and make for Littlehampton—"Hoist the affirmative, Scott, and carry on."

Ten minutes later an unexpected catastrophe took place. A defective eye-splice in one of the weather-shrouds gave out without any warning. The whole strain was thrown upon the remaining stay, and unable to stand the tension, that, too, parted.

With a terrific crash the mainmast broke off two feet above the deck, and fell overboard, carrying with it a raffle of canvas and cordage.

"Look!" exclaimed Reid. "She's dismasted."

"Up helm!" ordered Mr Carter. "Ease off the main sheet! Make straight for her, Osborne."

No longer punching to windward the "Petrel" ran with the wind almost right aft to the aid of her disabled consort.

The crew of the "Black Drake" were already hard at

work cutting adrift most of the trailing cordage in order to allow the yacht to ride to the wreckage.

Running close under her stern, Mr Carter hailed her in stentorian tones to know whether he should pass a line on board and tow her to any of the ports to leeward.

"No, thanks," shouted Scoutmaster Favershaw in reply. "We're all right for a while. The tide is keeping us from drifting. You might send a tug from Cowes to tow us in."

"Right, I will," replied the Scoutmaster of the "Petrel," at the same time giving order to close haul. Then with a friendly and sympathetic hand-wave the "Seals" set off on their errand.

"It's awfully unfortunate," remarked Osborne. "It will cost them something for repairs."

"And salvage," said Hornsby.

"Unless she's insured," added the Scoutmaster. "Anyhow we must lose no time. Look up a signal for 'Want a tug,' M'Kane."

On and on pounded the "Petrel," for the seas were now breaking furiously. So strong was the wind that the white crests of the waves were caught and blown into hissing showers of spray. Until the "Petrel" gained the lee of Egypt Point the crew were literally breathing salt-laden air.

"There's a steamer putting out of Cowes Harbour, sir," reported M'Kane.

"A tug?" inquired the Scoutmaster, who had gone below to consult the chart.

"No, sir, a white yacht."

"Is she standing in our way?" asked Mr Carter hurriedly folding the chart.

"Yes, sir, we could pass across her bows if we went about."

The Scoutmaster made his way up the ladder,

holding on like grim death for the motion was most erratic.

"Down helm!" he ordered. "We'll risk it! Get your hand-flags ready, M'Kane."

As the steam-yacht approached, M'Kane, supported by two of his comrades, stood upright in the well. His "call" was soon answered by a uniformed officer on the bridge.

"Sea Scouts' yacht dismasted off the West Lepe Buoy," signalled M'Kane. "Can you render assistance?"

The message was apparently communicated to the owner, for after a few minutes' delay, during which time the yacht's engines were reversed, a tall, elderly man joined the officer on the bridge.

"We will render all possible assistance," came the welcome reply, that brought a hearty cheer from the Sea Scouts of the "Petrel."

Then, with her propellers churning ahead at full speed, the yacht headed towards a small black speck in the midst of the foam-crested sea—the speck being the dismasted hull of the unfortunate "Black Drake."

"Now, lads," exclaimed Mr Carter casually, "here we are off Cowes. I'll leave it to you: would you prefer to carry on, or run into the harbour for shelter?"

"Carry on, sir," was the unanimous reply.

"Very good: carry on it is," assented the Scoutmaster.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SAFE IN PORT

It was a matter of ten miles to home and practically a dead beat all the way, but home is home all the world over. Although the Sea Scouts were loath to leave every one of the hospitable ports at which they touched, the magic word, home, was now predominant in their minds.

Under the lee of Old Castle Point yet another turn was taken with the reefing gear, and now snugly canvased the "Petrel" prepared to face the heavy seas that surged up from Spithead.

Receiving blow after blow the staunch little yacht flung herself into the fray, helped eastwards by the strong tide. Astern the dinghy was straining at her double painters, at one moment towering high above the "Petrel's" pointed stern, at another deep in the trough of the sea. Profiting by experience the crew lashed the oars to the thwarts, otherwise they would have been jerked out of the boat, but without shipping a drop of solid water the little tender swayed astern as lightly as a cork.

"We'll keep fairly close inshore till we reach Ryde, and then make a board across to Portsmouth, sir?" suggested Osborne.

"Capital plan, Osborne," replied the Scoutmaster. "If anything, the wind is veering slightly, and we are more sheltered on this side. About two hours before high water at Portsmouth is the best time to cross, for then there is slack tide at Spithead. How's that kettle progressing, Reid?" he

added, shouting to the Sea Scout who had undertaken cook's duty.

Receiving no reply, for the roar of the atmospheric stove, added to the thud of the seas against the yacht's sides, deadened all other sounds, the Scoutmaster made his way below.

There was Reid in the fo'c'sle, with his back wedged against the mainmast, holding the kettle on the stove.

"It's the only way I can manage it, sir," he explained. "The motion of the yacht would pitch it off if I didn't keep it down. Last time we went about the spout of the kettle was to leeward, and any amount of water was wasted."

"Then be careful when you pour out," cautioned Mr Carter. "I'll give you a hand. We'll be on this tack for some time, so we can wedge the tea-cups between the floor and the rise of the stove-locker."

Banging his head more than once and slipping and barking his shins against the table, Mr Carter eventually succeeded in getting eight cups from the pantry. These he placed in the position he had mentioned, and proceeded to make tea.

"You'd better hold the tea-pot while I get the milk, Reid," he suggested. "We cannot take too many precautions in a job of this sort."

Carefully the Scoutmaster poured out the milk, but owing to the erratic pitching and tossing of the "Petrel" each Sea Scout's share was far from being equal to the others, while a considerable quantity was spilled on the fo'c'sle floor.

"Now pour out," said Mr Carter.

After three cups had been filled a sudden lurch sent Reid against the bulkhead. He saved himself at the expense of the tea-pot, for the spout broke off

close to the body. The rest of the pouring-out operation became a sort of game of hit or miss. What didn't fall splash into the tea-cups mingled with the milk on the floor.

"That's all right now," exclaimed Reid, in tones of relief.

"Then I'll call all hands below save two," said Mr Carter. "There's nothing like a hot cup of tea on a day like this."

The Scoutmaster backed into the cabin, and holding on to one of the bunks prepared to turn round in order to ascend the companion-ladder. Ere he could accomplish this, the "Petrel" went about on the other tack, and with a crash the eight cups of tea went sliding from one side of the fo'c'sle floor to the other, in spite of Reid's desperate efforts to save them from destruction.

"'Tis good-bye to your tea, lads," declared the Scoutmaster. "We didn't know you were going about."

"Had to, sir," said Osborne; "we're almost too close inshore as it is. Never mind, sir, we can stick it all right till we get home."

A succession of short tacks brought the "Petrel" abreast the entrance of Wootton Creek, and, the wind veering still more, Mr Carter decided to make straight for the mouth of Portsmouth Harbour.

"Three quarters of an hour ought to do it," declared M'Kane. "We can see Trinity Church tower from here. Three cheers for Gosport—the harbour's in sight."

"Is that an aeroplane over there?" asked Hornsby, pointing to a grey object hardly discernible against the dark masses of clouds.

"Where?" asked several of the crew.

"Just to the left of the Noman Fort."

"It's a sea-gull, you juggins," said M'Kane, laughing.

"Think so?" asked Hornsby quietly. "You wait and see."

"Sorry I called you a juggins," exclaimed M'Kane, after a few seconds' pause. "You're right and I'm wrong."

"All the same it is like a sea-gull," rejoined Hornsby, unwilling to crow over his chum's discomfiture. "It is rolling. I never saw one flying like that before."

Nearer and nearer came the aircraft till the Sea Scouts saw that it was a seaplane, with two men on board.

"She's coming down, sir," exclaimed the Tenderfoot. "Won't she have a tossing on the rough sea."

"I'm afraid it's a case of needs must, Webb. It looks as if something were wrong."

Under perfect control the seaplane glided downward till her floats caught the tip of a crested breaking wave. Then with a splash she threw her tail high in the air till it seemed that she was on the point of turning completely over.

Then, caught by the wind, the aircraft spun round and regained her normal balance, though drifting helplessly at the mercy of wind and sea.

"She'll drift close across our bows, lads," exclaimed the Scoutmaster. "Stand by with a coil of rope in case she requires assistance."

M'Kane, grasping one of the weather shrouds, held up the coil of rope. A wave of the pilot's hand was sufficient to show that the offer was accepted.

"Now, Osborne," said Mr Carter quietly, "steer to windward of her. She is so light that it would be impossible to do otherwise or she would be blown right on to us."

Meanwhile, as the "Petrel" bore down upon the crippled seaplane, M'Kane came aft and prepared

to throw the rope to one of the airmen who, knee-deep in water whenever a wave broke, had made his way to the end of one of the floats.

The Sea Scout made a splendid throw. The rope was caught and deftly secured to a brace between the two floats, while Hornsby took a turn with the other end round the "Petrel's" towing bollard, allowing it to pay out slowly until the seaplane gathered way.

At first she towed awkwardly, offering considerable resistance to wind and sea; but when the "Petrel" resumed her former course with the wind now well abaft the beam the motion became less violent.

With wind and tide the "Petrel" tore betwixt Fort Blockhouse and the Round Tower, her distinguishing number proudly in the breeze, and when safely within the limits of Portsmouth Harbour the seaplane was cast off in order to be taken in tow by a steam pinnace from one of the battleships whose commanding officer had noticed the aviators' plight.

Into Haslar Creek the good ship "Petrel" ran, and without mishap made fast to the buoys close to the bridge. But instead of the anticipated welcome from the rest of the 9th Gosport Sea Scouts the yacht's arrival passed unnoticed.

"Strange," remarked Penarth. "We sent off from Yarmouth last night to say we expected to arrive this afternoon. It's like coming home on a cold winter's night and finding no fire in the room. It's jolly disappointing."

"Strikes me the other fellows don't care a straw about the 'Petrel,'" said Reid.

"Don't say that," expostulated Osborne. "Wait till we find out what is actually the matter. Perhaps they didn't get the letter, or there may be an inspection or something of the sort this afternoon."

"Hurry up and get everything shipshape," interposed the Scoutmaster. "Then we'll have tea and go ashore. It certainly is strange that none of our fellows are here to give us a welcome. The two boats are on the hard, I can see. Perhaps, after all, what Osborne said is correct."

Tea was over and the washing up operation in progress for the last time of the voyage when Webb happened to go on deck Sculling a yacht's dinghy a few yards off was little Collings, the Tenderfoot of the Otter Patrol.

"Ahoy, there, Collings!" shouted Webb.

The lad turned and stared in amazement.

"Hulloa, Webb: what brings you here?" he asked.

"Didn't you expect us? Here, you fellows, there's Collings of the 'Otters' alongside."

Greater still was the astonishment of the "Otters'" Tenderfoot when the rest of the Seal Patrol came tumbling up from below.

"Why," he exclaimed, "is this the 'Petrel'?"

"Sure it is," replied Osborne. "Come aboard, old chap, and see for yourself. Why this doubting?"

"Because we saw in this afternoon's paper that the 'Petrel' was dismasted and towed into Cowes. The rest of the Troop have taken the first steamer there to see if they could be of any use."

"They may be," said Mr Carter. "Fortunately it was not the 'Petrel' that was dismasted. All the same, I should like to know how the misleading news got into the papers."

"They will be wild," declared Collings. "From eleven this morning until two the fellows were on the look-out for you, to give you a rousing welcome. Then the news came and they all cleared off. I would have gone too, only Mr Richards told me to keep an eye on the boats."

"At all events they will have a chance of doing a good turn," said Osborne. "We felt rather sick about it because no one seemed at all anxious to welcome the 'Petrel,' but we don't mind now."

The Tenderfoot of the "Otters" having duly been shown over the new acquisition, the Sea Scouts prepared to bring their first cruise in the "Petrel" to a close.

"Don't forget your log-books, lads," cautioned Mr Carter. "If you've a chance finish writing them up to-night, while the incidents are fresh in your memory. In any case, I would like to have them to examine by Monday night. Now, that's all, I think. Everything shipshape down below? Good: now haul down the ensign and burgee."

The Sea Scouts' personal effects were transplaced into the two dinghies, and the lads were on the point of leaving the yacht when a naval steam pinnace approached, slowed down and ran alongside.

In the stern sheets was a young man in private clothes, whom the Sea Scouts had no difficulty in recognising as the pilot of the seaplane.

"Good afternoon!" he exclaimed pleasantly, returning the lads' salute. "I've just looked you up to thank you for giving me a pluck into harbour. You managed to get the seaplane in tow splendidly. 'Pon my word, I wouldn't have risked it, until I saw you were Sea Scouts, for a lubberly crew might have smashed us up entirely."

"We were only too pleased to find we were of use," replied the Scoutmaster.

"Of course I shall have to send in a report," continued the aviator—a sub-lieutenant attached to the Flying School at Calshot. "What is the name of your craft, and to whom am I indebted for assistance?"

"This is the 'Petrel,' and we are the Seal Patrol of the 9th Gosport Sea Scouts," replied Mr Carter.

"What! I heard from the fellows at Fort Blockhouse that the 'Petrel' was towed into Cowes this morning in a dismasted condition."

"You are not the first to hear that," replied the Scoutmaster. "The yarn is all over the place. It was a yawl called the 'Black Drake' that came to grief, and she was picked up by a white steam-yacht."

"That is so," assented the sub-lieutenant, "the yacht is the 'Nyleptha.' Then was the 'Black Drake' manned by Sea Scouts?"

"She was," replied Mr Carter, wondering how the young officer knew the name of the steam-yacht, since, from Tenderfoot Collings' account that information had not appeared in the papers.

"Well, it's a case of one good turn deserves another, I suppose," said the sub with a hearty laugh. "The Sea Scouts of the 'Petrel' rescue a seaplane piloted by Sub-Lieutenant Drake, and the steam-yacht 'Nyleptha,' owned by Sub-Lieutenant Drake's father, rescues the Sea Scouts of the 'Black Drake.' Curious, isn't it?"

"Are you Sub-Lieutenant Drake?"

"Yes, I must plead guilty—Douglas Drake of the Calshot Flying School. Coincidences will happen in the best regulated families, you know. Well, I must be off. Good-bye; I hope we'll run across each other soon, although under more favourable auspices. Good luck to all Sea Scouts and to the 'Petrel's' crew in particular."

. . . . .

A fortnight later Scoutmaster Carter met Stephen Dacres and Cyprian Fane by appointment.

The governor says he never had a more difficult task in all his experience, Carter," exclaimed the late owner

of the "Petrel," pointing to a pile of note-books on the table. "Every one of them is a credit to your youngsters. The log marked No. 4 is the best by a short head, so to speak."

"That's Osborne's— the Patrol Leader."

"Smart chap; you can tell him there's a rattling good opening for a sea-going apprentice in the Royal British and Pacific Steamship Company awaiting him, if he likes to accept it. If he goes on as he's commenced he'll be a skipper of a crack liner in another fifteen or twenty years. Then there's No. 7: who's that?"

"Hornsby, First Class Scout," replied Mr Carter, referring to a list in his pocket book.

"First class about describes him, too," added Dacres. "He will suit the Company to a tee, if he cares to accept a berth as apprentice. Do you think these fellows will?"

"Practically certain of it," said the Scoutmaster emphatically.

"I'm glad to hear it. Then there are Nos. 3 and 5 practically a dead heat."

"Penarth and Webb," announced Mr Carter.

"Ah, Webb; I remember him quite well. The governor was particularly pleased with his log. He said the lad wasn't ashamed to own he had made a mistake, and I think he made a few and profited by them. Anyway, next year there'll be a chance for Penarth. Let me see, how old is Webb—Tenderfoot isn't he?"

"Yes, he's fourteen and a half."

"H'm! Rather young for our line at present. Look here, Carter, would you mind sending him round this evening? I'd like to see his cheerful little countenance again, wouldn't you, Billy?"

"Rather," replied Fane.

We'll make a mercantile marine officer of him yet,"

continued Dacres. "Now, let us hear how you got on after you left Falmouth."

. . . . .

It is two years since the "Petrel" arrived at Gosport at the end of her voyage from Falmouth. The yacht, looking as taut and trim as of yore, lies at her moorings off the Hard. Another quarter of an hour and the sun will be setting.

Pacing the deck is a Sea Scout, whose duty it is to haul down the Ensign at the boom of the sunset gun, and to hoist the riding light on the forestay; pausing in his perambulations to pat the sleek coat of a handsome spaniel.

Presently his attention is directed towards a dinghy heading straight for the yacht. The rower, a bronzed young man in the uniform of the Royal British and Pacific Steamship Company, looks over his shoulder, and hails:

"'Petrel,' ahoy!"

"Come aboard, sir," is the Sea Scout's reply, followed by the order, "Below there, turn up on deck!"

The spaniel greeted the stranger with a bark.

"Hulloa, Cinders, old boy, so you've not forgotten me, eh?"

"Why, it's Osborne," exclaimed the Sea Scout, Tom Webb by name, now Tenderfoot no longer, but Leader of the "Seals," and a rattling good Leader too. "Come aboard and let me introduce you to the crew. You won't know many of them, I'm afraid."

Two years had wrought vast changes in the careers of the Sea Scout lads who had brought the "Petrel" home. New faces greeted Osborne as he descended the companion-ladder and entered the familiar cabin.

There were seven Sea Scouts down below. All of them knew the late Leader of the "Seals" by repute; some of them, long before they had made the Scouts' Promise, remembered him in his smart Sea Scout's rig.

"Sit down, old man," continued Webb, "and let's know all the news."

But before Osborne could "fire away" the sliding door of the fo'c'sle was shot back and a young man in Assistant Scoutmaster's uniform appeared.

"Well, Osborne, you have grown," he said.

Osborne looked at the newcomer's face for a few seconds, then extended his left hand.

"M'Kane, by all that's wonderful!" he exclaimed. "And an Assistant Scoutmaster, too."

"Yes, I received my warrant last week," replied M'Kane proudly. "You see, I haven't gone far away from Gosport. Scoutmaster Carter managed to get me a good post in Portsmouth Dockyard, you know. Well, how are you progressing?"

"Can't complain in the slightest," said Osborne, modestly. "The life afloat is A1. I've made three trips to the Pacific since I last saw you."

"Heard anything of Hornsby?"

"Ran across him at 'Frisco on our way home. He's jolly and getting as fat as a partridge; and you'll remember he hadn't too much flesh to spare. He told me that Penarth was on his first voyage to Shanghai. Now, how are my old comrades, Reid and Summers, getting on?"

"Both of them joined the Navy. Reid's people were a bit anxious about him going to Shotley at first, like they were when we fetched the 'Petrel' home; but now I think they're jolly glad. Mr Carter heard from Reid only last week. Both he and Summers are 'ear-marked.'"

"What's that?" asked Osborne. "A new kind of measles?"

"No; from what I can understand it means that they have shown more than average ability, and their names have been noted for early promotion to warrant officers."

"That's jolly decent news," commented Osborne.

"Yes, and they both admit that a great deal is owing to their training as Sea Scouts. Mr Carter will tell you more about it; he'll be on board to-morrow afternoon. How long are you down for?"

"I've been given a fortnight's leave, and you bet I'll spend most of it on the 'Petrel' if you fellows will put up with me. Good old Cinders! Aren't you a dear old dog. Why, Webb, where did you get that collar from?" asked the young officer, noticing a handsome silver collar round the spaniel's neck.

"Turn it round and you'll see," replied the Leader.

Osborne did so, and read, "Cinders — 9th Gosport Sea Scouts. A gift from A. Barbican, M.B., 19—."

"What does that mean?" asked Osborne. "Is it the dog or the collar that the inscription refers to?"

"Both," replied Webb promptly. "Dr Barbican gave us the collar and, under Providence, the dog's life; so you see."

"Any more news?"

"Heaps; but most of it will keep. Funny thing, though, only yesterday Mr Carter had a letter from Tommy Pentreath — the kid who played that trick upon us at Fowey. He's a First Class Scout now, and has just been awarded the Bronze Cross for rescuing, at great personal risk, the lives of two men who were cut off by the tide at Par Sands. Hulloa!" exclaimed

M'Kane, glancing at the clock, "it's just sunset. Turn out, you fellows!"

The sunset gun boomed across the placid waters of the harbour, and in company with others the "Petrel's" ensign was slowly lowered. And with the hauling down of that emblem we must bring to a close the Log of the Sea Scouts of the "Petrel."

PRINTED BY MORRISON AND GIBB LTD., LONDON AND EDINBURGH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR

Large Crown 4to. **Each 10s. 6d. net** (by post, 11s. 3d.)

The Enchanted Forest

By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite and Grenbry Outhwaite

Containing 31 full-page illustrations, 16 of them in colour, also decorative title-page, contents, endpapers, etc.

"No youngster could be but thrilled by this delightful book. It is charmingly and prolifically illustrated."—*Scotsman.*

The Little Fairy Sister

By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite and Grenbry Outhwaite

Containing 16 full-page illustrations, 8 of them in colour, also decorative title-page, contents, endpapers, etc.

"There are many who think that since the days of Grimm, Hans Andersen, and our own Lewis Carrol, the art of writing a fairy story is dead; but these, once they have read 'The Little Fairy Sister' . . . will find reason to alter their opinion in this respect."
Daily Graphic.

Blossom

By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

Containing 16 full-page illustrations, 8 of them in colour, and several line illustrations in the text, all by the Author.

"A story full of grace and charm."—*Birmingham Post.*

Bunny and Brownie

The Adventures of George and Wiggle

By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

With 16 illustrations by the Author, 8 of them in colour.

". . . told with just the right simplicity and *naïveté* for imaginative nursery readers."—*The Bookman.*

The Little Green Road to Fairyland

By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite and Annie R. Rentoul

Containing 16 full-page illustrations, 8 of them in colour, also decorative title-page, contents, endpapers, etc. In artistic cover.

Square demy 8vo. **Price 6s. net** (by post, 6s. 6d.)

"It is an intriguing road, and the illustrations will enhance its value to those who read, while Miss Rentoul's Fairy comes very near to the children because she can 'nearly cry' and has a heart to recognise human kindness."—*The Times.*

Published by

A. & C. BLACK LTD., 4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Life Stories of Animals

A new and attractive edition of some Life Stories of Animals, etc. Printed on good paper, containing a frontispiece in colour, and with an attractive picture jacket.
Crown 8vo, cloth. **Each 2s. 6d. net** (by post, 2s. 10d.)

ANIMALS THAT WORK.

THE BLACK BEAR	THE ELEPHANT	THE HORSE	THE RAT
THE CAT	THE FOWL	THE LION	THE SQUIRREL
THE DOG	THE FOX	THE MOOSE	THE TIGER

BLACK BEAUTY: The Autobiography of a Horse. By ANNA SEWELL.

THE ZOO ("The Artist's Sketch-Book" Series).
Containing 24 reproductions in facsimile from pencil drawings by A. W. PETERS. With artistic cover.
Demy 8vo. **1s. net** (by post, 1s. 3d.)

FRISKY TALES. True Nature Stories. By LADY FARREN.
Second Edition. Containing frontispiece in colour and 16 full-page illustrations from photographs.
Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **3s. 6d. net** (by post, 4s.)

By A. W. SEABY

"SKEWBALD," THE NEW FOREST PONY.
Fourth Impression. With frontispiece in colour and head-pieces to chapters.
Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **3s. 6d. net** (by post, 4s.)

EXMOOR LASS, AND OTHER PONY STORIES.
With frontispiece in colour and 76 illustrations from drawings by the Author.
Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **3s. 6d. net** (by post, 4s.)

THE BIRDS OF THE AIR; or, BRITISH BIRDS IN THEIR HAUNTS. With 8 plates in colour and 92 illustrations from drawings by the Author.
Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **5s. net** (by post, 5s. 6d.)

By T. A. COWARD, M.Sc., etc.

BIRDS AND THEIR YOUNG. With 12 mounted plates in colour and 32 plates in pen and ink by ROLAND GREEN, F.Z.S. Size 10 × 7½ in., cloth. Published at 10s. 6d. net
Offered at 6s. net (by post, 6s. 9d.)

THE LIFE OF BIRDS. *'How and Why'* Series. With 15 line illustrations.
Crown 8vo, cloth. **2s. 6d. net** (by post, 2s. 9d.)

Published by
A. & C. BLACK LTD., 4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Peeps at Nature

Edited by the Rev. CHARLES A. HALL, F.R.M.S.

Each containing illustrations in colour and black and white.

Large crown 8vo, cloth. **Each 2s. 6d. net** (by post, 2s. 10d.)

Each volume is written in simple terms, but scien ific accuracy is not sacrificed to popularity, and it is hoped that they will be the means of winning their readers to detailed study and accurate outdoor observations.

Volumes Ready

BIRDS' NESTS AND EGGS	By the Rev. CHARLES A. HALL, F.R.M.S.
BEES, WASPS, AND ANTS	
COMMON BRITISH BEETLES	
POND LIFE	
ROMANCE OF THE ROCKS	
TREES	
WILD FLOWERS AND THEIR WONDERFUL WAYS	
BRITISH BUTTERFLIES	By A. M. STEWART.
COMMON BRITISH MOTHS	
BRITISH LAND MAMMALS	By A. NICOL SIMPSON, F.Z.S.
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS	
BIRD LIFE OF THE SEASONS	By W. PERCIVAL WESTELL, F.L.S.
BRITISH FERNS, CLUB MOSSES, AND HORSE-TAILS	By DANIEL FERGUSON, M.A.
THE NATURALIST AT THE SEASHORE	By RICHARD ELMHIRST, F.L.S.
"ZOO" AQUARIUM	By A. E. HODGE, F.L.S.

HOW TO USE THE MICROSCOPE: A Guide for the Novice. By Rev. CHARLES A. HALL, F.R.M.S.

Second edition, containing 16 full-page illustrations from photo-micrographs and many line illustrations in the text.

Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **2s. 6d. net** (by post, 2s. 10d.)

PEEPS AT THE HEAVENS. By JAMES BAIKIE, D.D., F.R.A.S.

Containing 16 full-page illustrations (8 in colour).

Large Crown 8vo, cloth. **2s. 6d. net** (by post, 2s. 10d.)

Peeps at Nature for Little People

Each with 12 full-page illustrations (in colour, and 4 in black and white).

Square Crown 8vo. **Each 1s. 6d. net** (by post, 1s. 9d.)

CREATURES THAT FLY	Written and illustrated by WINIFRED VAIZEY.
CREATURES THAT SWIM	
CREATURES THAT WALK	Written by JUNE MORTON, Illustrated by W. VAIZEY.
CREATURES THAT CLIMB	
CREATURES OF THE NIGHT	
CREATURES OF THE FROZEN NORTH	

Published by

A. & C. BLACK LTD., 4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Peeps at Ancient Civilisations

By Rev. James Baikie, D.D., F.R.A.S.

Each containing full-page illustrations in colour and in black and white

Each 2s. 6d. net (by post, 2s. 10d.)

ANCIENT ASSYRIA.

" . . . should prove one of the most valued of the series, and should not fail to catch the attention of any young reader."
The Scotsman.

ANCIENT CRETE.

" His glowing chapters should capture the imagination of the dullest youngster." *The Times.*

ANCIENT EGYPT.

" A most fascinating book, which should find a place in every school library. . . ." *Educational Office Gazette.*

ANCIENT GREECE.

" So readable and informing a book, studded as it is with fine and instructive pictures, ought to be in home and school libraries."
Dundee Advertiser.

ANCIENT ROME.

" . . . a charming volume . . . profusely illustrated."
Aberdeen Free Press.

ANCIENT PALESTINE.

" Well written, with a true historical atmosphere, it will be read with interest by both young and old." *The Record.*

ANCIENT JERUSALEM.

" . . . a remarkably interesting volume in which he deals in a very vivid manner with the disasters to this great and wonderful city." *Sheffield Daily Telegraph.*

MEN OF THE OLD STONE AGE.

" Here, in language which any young person can understand, is unfolded the fascinating story of man's evolution."
Liverpool Review.

Published by

A. & C. BLACK LTD., 4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1